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AWARDS

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SWITCH ON

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

By ARNIE KATZ

This is the first issue of **Electronic Games** for 1983, and as everyone knows, the start of a new year is the usual time for nostalgic looks at the past and brave predictions about the future. Since I don't want to risk my membership in FUME (Fraternity of Underpaid Magazine Editors), I wouldn't dream of violating this time-honored tradition.

Of course, it's hard to get misty-eyed about the dear, dead days of 1972. Electronic games hardly existed before that date, so you're all going to be spared memories of my misspent youth when there were real videogamers who walked eleven-teen miles in the snow just to play a round of Space Invaders. (I distinctly remember crossing the street to get to a Pong machine, but that's about as far as it goes.)

By the same token, it is wrong to dismiss the history of electronic gaming altogether. All the great games didn't spring into existence this year, despite appearances to the contrary. This might be a good time to look at the

"Arcade Awards Retrospective" elsewhere in this issue. Isn't it amazing the way the truly outstanding games stand the test of time? This might be a good time to wander down memory lane by hauling out a few of the past four years' winners and renewing your acquaintance with the classics.

Speaking of the Arcade Awards, this is also the month when we announce the winners of the 1983 statuettes and the "new-this-year" Certificates of Merit. We've never given out so many honors in the four-year history of the Arkies, and choosing the recipients was never tougher. As chairman of the judging committee, I can tell you authoritatively that nearly every Arcade Award was decided only after long debate fortified by on-the-spot test-gaming. And even so, we may well have overlooked your favorite game. I do think that the winners represent the highest level of electronic gaming excellence, and our 10-page section on this year's competition could double as a buyer's guide to the hobby.

The future is also represented in this issue of **EG** with Rich Pearl's "21st Century Arcade" feature. If you want an inkling of what the fun palaces of the next century may very well be like, here's your window on the future.

Of course, Rich took the coward's way out and prognosticated about events that won't occur until two decades from now. I've got the tougher job of trying to make some predictions about what's likely to happen during the next 12 months. Not only is making short-range forecasts a more exact science than spouting long-term ones, but you'll all know how far off I was soon enough to nag me about it. Who knows where Rich Pearl will be in 2001?

Now that I've prepared for the consequences of being a million miles off, here's some of what I expect to see happen in 1983:

★ More than eight million programmable videogame systems will be sold in 1983.

★ Videogame software sales will climb to over 80 million cartridges.

★ Sales of home computers will double, with low-end machines that excel in playing games getting most of the business.

★ The first full-time professional videogame player will appear on the scene now that there are so many contests, tournaments and other avenues for gamers to make dough from their hobby.

★ Getting game programs over the telephone via the cable or even over the radio will become popular and practical before the end of the year.
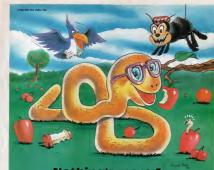
★ Programmable videogames small enough to strap to your wrist or drop into a pocket will be introduced.

★ At least two of the eight current major videogame systems will disappear, along with at least a few of the companies which have entered the software side of the business.

★ Frank Tetro and Bill Heineman, **EG's** strategists supreme, will continue to beat the rest of us staffers at everything from Defender to Deadline.

One final forecast: The year 1983 will see more great games, more handy gadgets and more innovative hardware for the hobby of electronic gaming than ever before. And **Electronic Games** will continue to provide accurate and knowledgeable coverage of this whole thrill-a-second field.

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Nothing's more fun than having a Tapeworm™

What, you don't have your Tapeworm™ yet? Well you better get one, because soon everybody's going to have this outrageous and contagious video game from Spectravision.

The object is to help 'Slinky' the Spectraworm keep growing longer and longer. To accomplish this, you must quickly and expertly gobble the beans that randomly pop up. Eat ten beans and you get a shot of a 'fruit' and big bonus points.

Sound like fun? It is, but every time you get the hang of it, a new obstacle presents itself. First there's 'Beaky' the bird and

'Sponky' the spider who dart out of nowhere to make a meal of your hero. It takes some real joystick wizardry to avoid these villains. You must also keep Slinky from gobbling himself up, a real problem when he gets longer. To top it all off, barriers start popping up as you progress to different phases.

Combining this great action with superior graphics and arcade like sound effects, Tapeworm™ will be one of your favorites soon after hundreds of plays. But after just one play, we think you'll agree Nothing's more fun than having a Tapeworm™!

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ELECTRONIC GAMES HOTLINE

NEW GAMES IN A FLASH ON

Byes

MORE SUN TO COME

The world's first electronic games operated solely by the sun are Bandai's two solar hand-held games, **Invaders of the Mummy's Tomb** and **Escape from the Devil's Doom.**

According to the folks who manufacture the carts, the games are burning up the marketplace, so Bandai plans to release two more very soon.

Future additions include **Sub Patrol**, in which gamers control a sailor who must plug up the leaks after his submarine is hit by depth charges, and **Shark Island**, which makes you an airplane crash survivor forced to make your way through shark-infested waters to a deserted island.

Once there, you continue battling sharks while awaiting a rescue vessel, which hopefully turns up before the sharkies get ya!

SOLAR POWERED GAMES

NEW REMOTE CONTROL JOYSTICK

More good news for owners of the Atari VCS and Commodore VIC-20. . .With the invention of the Game Mate II remote controller, players will now be able to effectively operate their joysticks from up to 20 ft. away from their gaming systems.

Cynex Manufacturing has devised the unit, a small box that plugs into the back of the videogame which can receive signals from specially adapted joysticks that send signals by radio waves.

Game Mate II retails for about $100 and includes two joysticks and a receiver.

THE NATIONAL VANITY BOARD
Today's Top Coin-op Scores

Electronic Games is proud to announce the creation of the National Vanity Board to identify and honor the nation's arcade aces. Just as the National Arcade (set to debut next month) salutes the achievements of the lords and ladies of livingroom gaming, the National Vanity Board will monitor the triumphs of the kings and queens of the coin-op videogaming world.

EG will update the listings each month based on information provided by game manufacturers, arcade operators and, most importantly, our hundreds of thousands of readers. If you or one of your buddies rewrites the record book for the most popular commercial arcade machines, getting the proper recognition for the new champ is as easy as following these three steps:

1. Set the record
2. Show the arcade manager on duty your record score and have him (or her) sign the proper portion of the report form—copies or facsimiles are fine.
3. Mail your score report to: Electronic Games, 235 Park Avenue South, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Here Are the Arcaders to Beat!

Battlezone (Atari)
Dennis Hramtzky
Grapevine, TX
Record: 9,600,500

Missile Command (Atari)
Joe Fernandes
Artesia, CA
Record: 52,246,260

Centipede (Atari)
Dave Marsden
Santo, TX
Record: 5,764,912

Star Castle (Cinematronics)
Bob Mines, Jim Prusey
Cortland, OH
Record: 9,833,940

Crazy Climber (Nichibutsu)
Jim Wright
Lake Orion, MI
Record: 489,150

Defender (Williams)
Marvin Norton
Salford, AZ
Record: 49,367,750

Pac-Man (Midway)
Dave Marsden
Santo, TX
Record: 14,880,210

Scramble (Stern)
Jason Itzler
Cliffside Park, NJ
Record: 8,410,900

Astro Blaster (Sega/Gremlin)
Ralph DeMarzo
Brooklyn, NY
Record: 91,640

Dig-Dug (Atari)
Mark Hunt
Seattle, WA
Record: 2,360,000

Donkey Kong (Nintendo)
Steve Sanders
Clifton, MO
Record: 863,500

Frogger (Sega/Gremlin)
Dave McPhee
Muncie, IN
Record: 507,230

Galaga (Midway)
Dave Marcotte
Kenosha, PA
Record: 4,314,000

Omega Race (Midway)
Rick Kin
Lonvalle, MT
Record: 1,215,200

Robotron (Williams)
Dennis Felland
Madison, WI
Record: 76,223,720

Tempest (Atari)
Eric Ginsberg
Fredericksburg, VA
Record: 1,697,634

Wizard of Wor (Midway)
Brian Graves
Apple Valley, MN
Record: 313,000

Zaxxon (Sega/Gremlin)
Rod Knowlton
Ft. Smith, AK
Record: 1,006,250

Tron (Midway)
Lynn Taylor
Virginia Beach, VA
Record: 795,584

Solar Fox (Midway)
Rick McClellan
Columbus, OH
Record: 221,110

Thief (Pacific Novelty)
Ed Mixed
Columbus, OH
Record: 134,330

Rick-Man (Midway)
Rich Turkishev
Manitov Springs, CO
Record: 4,429,555

Kangaroo (Atari)
Franck Haggerty
Cresskill, NJ
Record: 162,400

Looping (Venture Line)
Bruce Boulden
Frankfort, IN
Record: 449,500

MISSILE COMMAND

WIZARD OF WOR

ROBOTRON

PITFALL TOPS POPULARITY POLL

Activision's Arcade Award winning adventure video-game Pitfall shook off during its first month of eligibility in our videogame popularity poll. EG's readers have embraced the game en masse, putting it at the top of the standings and forcing former champion Defender down to third place behind Berzerk.

ColecoVision, newly on the market at the time of the balloting, immediately made its presence felt by putting two cartridges, Donkey Kong and Venture, into the top 15

Donkey Kong isn't just a favorite among home arcaders, though. The Nintendo pay-for-player that started the whole thing still rates as the most popular coin-op machine among the readers of Electronic Games. Also holding onto its first place position was Star Raiders, the Atari blockbuster that has topped every installment of the poll as the best-liked computer game.

PAC-MAN SCORES!

The award for the very best videogame cartridge, presented by the Video Software Dealers Assn., has been easily copped by Atari's well-known Pac-Man.

VSDA claims the award represents "what customers are willing to pay for", which differs from most awards in the industry. Future plans call for more awards to be presented annually for the most popular titles in the home videogame market.

ATARI PAC-MAN

☆ Most Popular Videogame Cartridges ☆

Position This Month	Last Month	Game	System	Manufacturer
1	1	Pitfall	Atari VCS	Activision
2	5	Berzerk	Atari VCS	Atari
3	1	Defender	Atari VCS	Atari
4	3	Major League Baseball	Intellivision	Mattel
5	6	Demon Attack	Atari VCS	Imagic
6	-	Donkey Kong	Atari VCS	Coleco
7	4	Night Stalker	Intellivision	Mattel
8	8	Star Master	Atari VCS	Activision
9	9	Adventure	Atari VCS	Atari
10	-	Frogger	Atari VCS	Parker Brothers
11	14	Missile Command	Atari VCS	Atari
12	12	K.C. Munchkin	Odyssey	Odyssey
13	-	Donkey Kong	ColecoVision	Coleco
14	8	Pac-Man	Atari VCS	Atari
15	-	Venture	ColecoVision	Coleco

☆ Most Popular Computer Programs ☆

Position This Month	Last Month	Game	System	Manufacturer
1	1	Star Raiders	Atari 400/800	Atari
2	3	Pac-Man	Atari 400/800	Atari
3	5	Jawbreaker	Atari 400/800	Sierra On-Line
4	-	Missile Command	Atari 400/800	Atari
5	-	Centipede	Atari 400/800	Atari
6	6	Wizardry	Apple II	Sir-Tech
7	2	Castle Wolfenstein	Apple II	Muse
8	-	Crossfire	Apple II, Atari 400/800	Sierra On-Line
9	-	Choplifter	Apple II	Broderbund
10	-	Gorgon	Apple II	Sirus

☆ Most Popular Coin-Op Videogames ☆

Position This Month	Last Month	Game	Manufacturer
1	1	Donkey Kong	Nintendo
2	2	Dig-Dug	Atari
3	3	Tron	Midway
4	7	Tempest	Atari
5	8	Zaxxon	Sega/Gremlin
6	4	Ms. Pac-Man	Midway
7	6	Pac-Man	Namco/Midway
8	-	Galaga	Midway
9	5	Robotron	Williams
10	-	Gorf	Midway

Readers Choose Top Games

Since mere quantity of play doesn't necessarily equal actual popularity, Electronic Games bases its standings on the votes of its readers. These lists of most popular games are based on the more than 1000 Reader Polls. We update the "picked hits" lists in every issue of Electronic Games. So send in your votes!

ARCADE SCOREBOARD

THE BEST SCORES FOR POPULAR VIDEOGAMES

Photos of readers' best scores are really pouring into the offices of *Electronic Games*, and the competition among the land's arcade aces is even keener than expected. There are plenty of top players out there, and the rankings listed here show that they're hitting the joystick hot and heavy in a bid for national recognition.

The scores tabulated here reflect the first group of games which the editors of EG selected to kick off this continuing compilation of home videogaming records. We'll be adding more games and updating their scores each month, a few at a time, until we're covering most of what's hot.

To have your gaming achievements recognized in the National Arcade Scoreboard, all you've got to do is follow a few simple rules:

1. Every score must be accompanied by a photograph of the TV screen showing the score. These photos do not have to be of publishable quality, just readable by our judges.

2. All photographs received become the property of *Electronic Games* and none can be returned.

3. Be sure to include your complete name and address. (We will print only the name and city in the magazine, but we may want to contact high scorers for helpful gaming hints.)

Games currently eligible for the National Arcade Scoreboard are:

- ★ **UFO** (Odyssey) — Game #1
- ★ **Asteroids** (Atari VCS) — Game #6
- ★ **Grand Prix** (Activision) — Course #4
- ★ **USAC Auto Racing** (Mattel) — Course #1
- ★ **Spacechase** (Apollo) — Game #1
- ★ **Defender** (Atari VCS) — Game #1
- ★ **Space Hawk** (Mattel) — Game #1

THE HONOR ROLL

UFO/Odyssey/Odyssey [1]/Game #1
1. **1,636** — Lee Raymond, no address given
2. **1,575** — Jim Peterson, Farmington Hills, MI
3. **1,461** — Marlon Burns, Chicago, IL

Asteroids/Atari/Atari VCS/Game #6
1. **199,990** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, WI
2. **195,810** — Bob Clarke, Racine, WI
3. **129,460** — Bob Prindle, Erie, PA

Grand Prix/Activision/Atari VCS/Course #4
1. **1:35:88** — Mike Ratledge, Charleston, SC
2. **1:36:73** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, IL
3. **1:38:95** — Jerry Pierce, Stonington, IL

USAC Auto Racing/Mattel/Intellivision Course #1
1. **2:55** — Jerry Kurfess Jr., Jackson, MI
2. **2:58** — John Bunk, Johnstown, PA
3. **2:59** — Don Smith, Pease AFB, NH

Spacechase/Apollo/Atari VCS/Game #1
1. **185,075** — Tom Garcia, Whittier, CA
2. **93,300** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, WI
3. **42,600** — John Opiela, Philadelphia, PA

Defender/Atari/Atari VCS
1. **1,182,500** — Ron Kramer, Glassport, PA
2. **1,099,950** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, WI
3. **1,016,460** — Todd Alexander, Richmond, VA

Space Hawk/Mattel/Intellivision
1. **10,143,040** — Luc Labelle, Manitoba, Canada
2. **5,190,660** — Steve Connelly, Boone, NC
3. **2,025,890** — John Cutler II, Cedar Rapids, IA

GRAND PRIX

UFO

BAD NEWS FOR INTELLIVISION OWNERS.

Demon Attack

Atlantis

Microsurgeons

Beauty & the Beast

IMAGIC

Created by Experts for Experts.

E.T. OR NOT E.T.?

I recently heard that Atari will be making a cartridge based on the movie "E.T." for the VCS. What would be the object of the game and when will it be available?

Paul Valdez
Newark, CA

Ed: Would you believe a videogame in which the object is to nick a cute little alien from the outside world? Seriously, Atari just inked the deal that will have Spielberg himself helping out with the design chores. No release date or further info have been released to the press. Rest assured, however, you'll read about "E.T." in "EG" first!

COLECOVISION

FLYNN-FLAMMED

In your article "Pop Culture Meets Videogames" you said that Beau Bridges played the part of Flynn in "Tron". Actually, his brother Jeff Bridges handled the role. I love your publication and thought you would appreciate my informing you of this error.

Jeff Henderson
Floreville, IL

Ed: Did you ever get a piece of misinformation stuck so solidly inside your head that no amount of effort will dislodge it? Despite evidence that it was Jeff, not Beau, who portrayed the dashing young computer wizard, we just couldn't get it straight. Your correction is appreciated, Beau.

MORE PICTURES

I have an Atari VCS, and I really enjoy your magazine. I just got Grand

COLECOVISION SPACE FURY

Prix, which I read about in your June issue.

I liked seeing the picture of it in your "Programmable Parade" section. I wish you could show what the cartridge is going to look like on the screen for all the games you cover.

It's great to know that instead of buying a cartridge I won't like, I can buy your magazine and get the facts first. Please keep up your good work.

Kenneth Riddett
Saluda, VA

Ed: We're in complete agreement with you about how important it is to show playfields. Look for even more of them in future issues.

MORE EDITORIAL GOOFS!

As amazed and excited as I was to learn of the "easter egg" hunts in the upcoming Atari cartridges, I was equally surprised to find egg on the faces of Electronic Games' staff. The

photo of the **Centipede** coin-op machine on page 16 of your June issue is *inverted*. Obviously, you guys have been plugged into your terminals too long.

Steve Rotterdam
Kew Garden, NY

Ed: Sigh. Ah, well, I guess I couldn't convince you that you were actually looking at a photo of that sensational new coin-op Edepiteec? Well, Steve? Steve?

SPEAKING OF INTELLIVOICE...

As a buyer for Northwest Electronics, I read your magazine every month. We are a distributor for Mattel, Activision, Imagic, Commodore, TDP and other forms of consumer electronic products.

Since we are a progressive company, we realize our dealers and their customers demand high quality graphics and game play in their selections. To provide this, we test and play each and every game we are presented.

With this background, I wish to point out the Intellivoice unit for the "Intel" becomes passive when a non-voice cartridge is inserted. Your answer to Terry Barr on p. 21 of the October EG is somewhat incorrect. I must say I have not tried *every* Intel cartridge in the voice module, but I have used at least 10 different titles and the voice unit just sits there causing no problem with game play whatsoever.

The only observation I have is this. The unit could be damaged physically if it is picked up and moved without

COLECOVISION VENTURE

care. The voice unit just fits into the cartridge port and there is no real support, once it is picked up off a table. Therefore, it would be wise to remove it when moving the unit to prevent damage. By the way, the Intellivoce has a volume control on it so one can adjust the volume on it —

ELECTRONIC GAMES 21

rather than that on the TV.

So far we have seen and heard *Space Spartans* and *B-17 Bomber*. Both are super *B-17* doesn't have as much voice action as *Spartans*, but it's a very complex and action-filled game

Paul A. Reanck
Northwest Electronics
Spokane, WA

Ed: You're absolutely correct, Paul, as you may have noticed in the introduction to this issue's "Q&A" column. Still, we appreciate your explanation and hints and feel they merit printing. Thanks for taking the time and interest to write

ARCADE ALASKA??

What would you have to do if you wanted to own an arcade? How much

INTELLIVOICE

would it cost? Also, what would you have to do and how much would it cost to sell the ColecoVision and its accessories?

Fredenck Dingledy Jr
Anchorage, Alaska

Ed: The first thing anyone interested in opening an arcade should do is check out the local ordinances See what your town's laws have to say on the subject. In many states, retail outlets are allowed to have a few coin-ops, but getting a regular arcade sanctioned can be an experience in frustration.

On the matter of becoming a dealer for a home system, it would be necessary to contact Coleco and find out about its distribution network.

And if anyone gives you the cold shoulder, just call us. (Sorry.)

RATING THE RATINGS

I just had an idea that you may want to use in your magazine. Why not have a videogame rating countdown from 1 to 10 (10 being best)? This

M-NETWORK FOOTBALL

system could be applied to home games, coin-ops, etc.

Michael Lopez
Sun Valley, CA

Ed: We have, at various times, toyed with the idea of rating videogames, but so far have resisted for several reasons. Most importantly, since we have the room to really get into the games we review, any numbered rating would be superfluous. Numerical ratings can be very useful in newsletters — such as our own Arcade Express — where space is limited, but in a full, well-written review, the writer's total viewpoint should be quite clear without a rating.

Anybody have any thoughts on this question? As always, EG welcomes the opinions of the entire readership

ODYSSEY

AN ODYSSEY ODDITY

I enjoy **EG** and am interested in what little news comes up about Odyssey². I am now in the Air Force, stationed in the U.K. and own a Philips G7000, O²'s twin.

Philips has a whole line of cartridges that you can't find in the states. Most don't operate on the U.S. Odyssey but one game, **Stone Sling**, does. It is a "must" for every Odyssey² owner. Why aren't these games offered in the states?

David Jacksch
APO, NY

Ed: Now that is an intriguing question. While it's true that the U.S. operation is independent of its European cousin, it doesn't seem right that there's a classic videogame cartridge that American gamers have no access to — especially considering the paucity of recent O² releases.

EG is taking a visit to the Knoxville World's Fair in the near future, and we'll personally check this out.

M NDT-WORK?

Is it true that the new "M-Network" games will not fit the older model 2600's? I was told that the cartridges were too wide! This seems highly unlikely for Mattel to make such a major mistake.

Mark Ziegler
Westland, MI

Ed: "Unlikely" is, indeed, a very good word for it. Actually, though, unlikely or not, early reports from retailers indicate that the casings on a good many of the early releases were poorly constructed and did not properly fit into the 2600 cartridge slot. Mattel has totally corrected the problem.

A similar difficulty involving the VCS-compatible Coleco cartridges also turned up recently. Seems the company tested the games on the new 2600 systems but nobody ever thought to try them out on the original VCS. Fortunately, Coleco shortstopped this difficulty very early on, made the appropriate recalls and accomplished the refitting with relatively few problems.

APOLOGIA

Just wanted to straighten out the cover credits for our October and November issues. The cover for the October **EG** was photographed by Tom Weihs, and the lovely model was Lynn Danaldson. The November cover was illustrated by Peter Thulke.

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Arcade

These Are the Year's Greatest Games!

By
ARNIE KATZ & BILL KUNKEL

When the first set of Arcade Awards (Arkies) were distributed four years ago, electronic gaming was only a budding hobby with a world of potential. By beginning and financially underwriting the awards, Reese Publishing Company hoped to honor the great achievements in the field and, thereby, encourage producers of programmable videogame cartridges, computer game software, coin-op machines and stand-alone devices to strive for even higher quality in the future

Events during the 12-month period covered by the awards—a title must have become available between October 1, 1981 and October 1, 1982 to be eligible this time—have gone far to fulfill the hopes of electro-gamers. More electronic games appeared during the last year than in the entire era covered by the Arcade Awards! And it's not just quantity. Many games which might have rated an Arkie in previous years are going home empty-handed today.

Videogame of the Year

Demon Attack

(Imagic for the Atari VCS)

Rob Fulop, the creator of Missile Command, proved he was more than a one-shot wonder with the publication of this outstanding invasion game. Demon Attack combines varied, fast-paced action with superb graphics to produce a contest that is as delightful to the eyes as it is to play. More than one usually blasé arcader has ended up spending half the night at the VCS trying to score enough points to see "just one more screen"

Demon Attack's publication proved to be a real shot in the arm to the videogame cartridge category, because it showed how much could be done with the hugely popular VCS system. It has

quickly become the yardstick against which all other cartridges for that machine must be measured, while putting newcomer Imagic on the software map virtually overnight.

Certificate of Merit: Star Master (Activision for the Atari VCS). Tactics and strategy both play crucial parts in this space piloting and shooting game. Players use the VCS' color black and white switch to toggle back and forth between a galaxy map showing which friendly star bases are currently under enemy attack, to a battle board on which electronic color Skywalkers can dogfight with marauding alien ships.

Certificate of Merit: Atlantis (Imagic, for the Atari VCS) The legendary city of Atlantis is under attack, and the arcader must train three guns to destroy the menace, raining death from above in this clever shooting game that has elements of Air-Sea Battle and Missile Command in its design. A clever control set-up lets the gamer choose which one of the three weapons will fire with just a flick of the wrist

Best Science Fiction/Fantasy Videogame

Defender

(Atari, for the Atari VCS)

Like several other Arcade Award winners, Defender is so excellent in so many areas that it could have won no fewer than three different plaques with equal justice. This scrolling shoot-out provides the type of non-stop action found on the Williams' coin-op machine on which it is based. Some quarter-snatchers have reached the home arcades of America in cruelly distorted form, but this VCS edition is a loving tribute to the original

A prime worry about any VCS cartridge that boasts so much happening at one time would be the quality of the graphics. While the Atari design team had to make some alterations to make Defender fit within the VCS' limitations, they have per-

DEMON ATTACK

The Arcade Awards are responding to the coming of this golden age of gaming in two major ways. First, we've greatly increased the number of Arcade Award plaques to cover all four major branches of the hobby. Second, we are establishing the Arcade Award Certificates of Merit to salute games which attain the highest level of quality, yet do not win an Arcade. The Arcade Award Judges Committee has also compiled the usual list of Honorable Mentions to give some recognition to those excellent games that fail an eyelash short of walking off with an Arcade Award or Certificate of Merit.

The rules which govern the selection of electronic gaming's most prestigious awards are as follows:

1. All electronic games marketed nationally between October

1, 1981 and October 1, 1982 are eligible.

2. No individual game may win both an Arcade Award and a Certificate of Merit, nor may any title win more than one Arkie or Certificate.

3. When, as in the case of videogames or computer programs, the same design is published for use with more than one system, only one version will be considered eligible for an award. This will be either the original edition or, if several are published simultaneously, the one which the judges feel has the greatest merit.

That legalese out of the way, let's get down to the main event — announcing the names of the winners.

DEFENDER

formed their labors with such cunning that the player is treated to a true evocation of the kind of action that has made Defender such a favorite of arcade aces.

Certificate of Merit: Space Jockey (U.S. Games, for the Atari VCS). Charming graphics set this shoot-out apart from other cartridges in the same genre. There's no lack of thrills as you pilot your speedy and maneuverable attack saucer in battle against jets, propellor planes, helicopters, tanks and barrage balloons.

Certificate of Merit: Encounter at L-5 (Data Age, for the Atari VCS). The mecaless MegaApes are attacking Earth's L-5 colony, which hangs in space just beyond the orbit of the moon. The menace from the MegaApe Galaxy will wipe the hardy pioneers off the face of the universe, unless the arcader can use the anti-matter projector to atomize the attackers.

Certificate of Merit: Threshold (Tigervision). This multi-

playfield invasion game is one of the slickest cartridges published recently. The addition of vertical movement to the standard back-and-forth shuttling at the bottom of the screen lends fresh excitement to what is already a fast-paced blast-about.

Most Innovative Videogame

Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt
(Odyssey, for the Odyssey²)

The most recent addition to the celebrated Master Strategy Series of combination videogame/boardgames is, in many ways, the best of the three. Certainly it is as fresh and innovative as its two predecessors. It steers a brave, though risky, course by substituting rock-solid play value for what would have been meaningless graphic trappings.

Yet this stock market simulation for one or more players does make excellent use of the TV display. The central focus of the game is the information that scrolls across the screen in the form of a realistic stockticker and newswire.

Another big plus for **Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt** is the control system. Participants input their commands via the joystick, making what would otherwise be a most complex game, relatively easy to handle.

Certificate of Merit: Nexar (Spectravision, for the Atari VCS). Here's a science fiction shoot-out that isn't an invasion game, first-person piloting contest or a scrolling shoot-out — and still manages to be one of the most exciting action cartridges published this year! Arcaders use a cursor to direct fire toward the center of the screen, from which point invading spacecraft and their guide-beacons erupt in all directions at a variety of speeds. **Nexar** is a truly inspired videogame cartridge.

Certificate of Merit: Word Zapper (U.S. Games, for the Atari VCS). This is one brain game that won't turn off the blast

Best Solitaire Videogame
Donkey Kong
(Coleco, for ColecoVision)

This is the home edition of the popular Nintendo climbing coin-op that has made **Donkey Kong** popular even with those who may not have given the design a thorough try-out the first time around. Putting Mario through his paces as you try to stamper up the skyscraper to rescue your girlfriend from the clutches of the giant gorilla who has kidnapped her is 24 karat entertainment.

Donkey Kong's relatively high degree of difficulty enhances the appeal of this cartridge to the solo gamer. You can't beat this one instantly, yet it never fails to hold out the hope that success is just another round away.

A combination of outstanding visuals and variable patterns within the same overall structure are what makes **Donkey Kong** so compelling to the solo gamer. But don't get so distracted by the perfectly animated ape that you fail to notice the barrel which has just gone down the ladder you weren't expecting him to use.

DONKEY KONG

Certificate of Merit: *Berzerk* (Atari, for the Atari VCS). It was a happy day for gamers when Atari announced it was bringing Stern's **Berzerk** to the home screen. But that joy was nothing compared to the glee with which arcaders greeted the actual arrival of this flicker-free maze shoot-out.

Certificate of Merit: *Infiltrate* (Apollo for the Atari VCS). This colorful cartridge combines elements of the climbing game with aspects of the maze-shoot to produce something absolutely unique. Players ride elevators up and down the skyscraper skeleton, dueling with the monsters who have taken it over before the start of the game.

Best Multi-Player Videogame
The Incredible Wizard
(Astrocade, for the Astrocade)

This volume-game version of **Wizard of War** (Midway) is both the best multi-player videogame of all time and the best single title

THE INCREDIBLE WIZARD

ever released for use with the Astrocade (formerly Bally Professional Arcade) system. Two gamers can participate as adversaries or combine their efforts as a team in this sophisticated maze-shoot.

The Incredible Wizard is a breathtaking experience as a team-versus-the-machine competition. When both arcaders get into the rhythm of this multi-maze extravaganza, the action races across the length and breadth of the playfield as visible and invisible monsters alike assault the human-controlled warriors from every direction at the same time.

Teamwork comes in especially handy once a particular maze has been cleared of the garden-variety creatures. That's when the specials like the butterfly and the Incredible Wizard himself put in an appearance.

Certificate of Merit: *Conquest of the World* (Odyssey, for the Odyssey). Can you make the right decisions, ones that blend subtle diplomacy with brute force, that will make your country into a world power? That's the challenge of **Conquest of the World**, part of Odyssey's Master Strategy Series. Videogame and boardgame action are perfectly blended in this simulation of global power struggles.

Certificate of Merit: *Bowling* (Mattel, for Intellivision). Great graphics that include multiple display screens are the icing on the cake for this pin-bashing cartridge. Complete scoring that's just like real bowling and outstanding pin-action animation make this fun to watch even when you're just waiting for your turn.

Best Videogame Audio/Visual Effects
Smurfs
(Coleco, for ColecoVision)

What more can be said about a cartridge based on a popular Saturday morning cartoon show than that it looks like a Saturday morning cartoon show? No videogame in recent memory has offered visuals that pull the kind of gasps of admiration that **Smurfs: Rescue at Gargamel's Castle** invariably receives.

As the player uses the joystick and action button to guide the heroic smurf over hill and dale on the way to the castle to rescue the Smurf princess, the world of these lovable furry creatures scrolls past, rendered in unbelievable detail. Then it's time to enter the castle where scuttling creatures bar the path to the lady in distress.

Although the game is probably directed mainly at kids, Smurfs' play-action coupled with its captivating visuals make it just as much of a treat for adults.

SMURF

Certificate of Merit: *Phaser Patrol* (Arcadia, for the Atari VCS plus Supercharger). A quick way to find out for yourself how much the Supercharger can improve VCS graphics is to run the game tape that comes packaged with the device. *Phaser Patrol* brings high resolution graphics to the first-person space piloting and combat genre, and the results are fantastic! It makes saving the known universe more fun than ever.
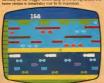
Certificate of Merit: *Triple Action* (Mattel, for the Intellivision). Once again, Mattel's designers have taken a supposedly played-out idea, arcade/action-style head-to-head combat, and given it fresh life with an outstanding visual treatment. The biplane scenario, in particular, is an absolute joy to behold.

Best Arcade-to-Home Videogame Translation

Frogger

(Parker Brothers, for the Atari VCS)

The sweetest words a designer who is doing a home edition of a popular coin-op can ever hear are: "That's it! That's the arcade game!" The anonymous creator of *Frogger* has certainly heard those words a lot recently, because this is as close to the Sega quarter-snatcher as anyone could possibly come, within the restrictions imposed by the VCS system. From the two-part harmony on the *Frogger* theme song to the driving turtles, this home version is remarkably true to its inspiration.

FROGGER

The player uses the joystick to steer frogger across a highway choked with traffic, over a debris-filled river and into the safety of one of the grottoes located at the top of the screen. For those who aren't quite up to the rigors of the full-blown version, a flick of the difficulty switch allows the frogger to scroll off the screen on a log and then appear at the opposite edge of the display, instead of getting eliminated as in the coin-op.

Certificate of Merit: *Galactic Invasion* (Astrocade, for the Astrocade). If the Astrocade makes good on its comeback bid, this edition of Midway's invasion game, *Galaxian*, should get a big hunk of the credit. A choice of nine skill levels makes it simple to match the player's skill with the pace of the action. At upper levels of difficulty, *Galactic Invasion* is a veritable cyclone of swooping aliens and whizzing laser bombs.

Certificate of Merit: *Venture* (Coleco, for the ColecoVision). No one ever disputed the fact that Exidy's *Venture* is one fascinating commercial arcade game. Some players do feel that the circus atmosphere of the typical fun palace is not the proper place to investigate the multitude of play possibilities packed into *Venture*. Well, thanks to Coleco, you can now bring this one home and sit up with it all night until you've guided the intrepid Winky into every nook and cranny of this painstakingly crafted translation.

Best Action Videogame

Chopper Command

(Activision, for the Atari VCS)

Two direction scrolling shoot-outs have quickly established a reputation for all-out action. *Chopper Command* may be the most frenetic shoot-out in this super-heated game category.

CHOPPER COMMAND

Players are at the throttle of an armored — and heavily armed — helicopter which must protect the truck convoy on the ground against airborne attack from a variety of aircraft. A radar scope which shows the positions of some of the enemy ships is an aid, but it still takes fast reflexes and even faster thinking to stay on top of the amazingly fluid situation.

The sound effects contribute mightily to *Chopper Command's* stratospheric level of excitement. The throb of the whirlybird's blades and the staccato beat of the machine guns would make players chew their nails to the quick if they weren't so busy dishing out destruction to the enemy.

Certificate of Merit: *Space Cavern* (Apollo, for the Atari VCS). This sequel to last year's *Space Chase* casts the gamer as a space farer who has landed on a strange planet and stumbled upon an immense cavern inhabited by nasty aliens. If the electrosaun that hover near the ceiling of the cave don't fry you,

the hairy marsupials will dash out of a side cave and gobble you up for dinner. Space Cavern is slam-bang action of the highest caliber

Certificate of Merit: *Room of Doom* (CommaVid, for the Atari VCS) There's little rest and no safe haven for the arcader's on-screen representative in this fine action contest. The gamer uses the joystick to move the character around a room with doorways on every wall — and gunmen blasting away through each opening. And as if that won't keep you busy enough, there's a monster in the room with you who has nothing better to do than chase you all over the screen!

Best Adventure Videogame
Pitfall
(Activision, for the Atari VCS)

Your name is Pitfall Harry. Your home turf is the jungle, and you're looking for adventure, treasure or, preferably, both in large doses. That's the theme of the first adventure ever

PITFALL

produced by Activision, the trailblazing publisher of software for the VCS. Though most previous ACTV titles are often termed "plug and play" cartridges because they are so easy to learn, this is as richly complex a videogame as you'll find anywhere.

The fine graphic sense of the Activision design team greatly enriches the Pitfall experience. Watching Harry swing across a quicksand pit on a slender vine while crocodiles snap their jaws frantically as a futile effort to tear off a little leg-of-hero snack is what videogame adventures are all about. One mark of this cartridge's excellence is that when you, as Harry, finally do find some golden treasure, you'll know you've worked hard to get it.

Certificate of Merit: *Earthworld* (Atari, for the Atari VCS) This is the first cartridge in what will ultimately constitute a four-game quest. Atari produced the first videogame adventures, Superman and Adventure, and the company's newest effort features effective graphics and an unusual brand of challenge that may make Earthworld a particular favorite of action game fans.

Certificate of Merit: *Riddle of the Sphinx* (Imagic, for the Atari VCS). Imagic has taken a radically different approach to videogame adventuring than its competition. In this Egyptian-themed fantasy game, the on-screen hero moves through the Land of the Nile as it scrolls down the display toward him. Mystery is the watchword and danger lurks everywhere in this bracing change from the usual dragon-hunt.

So for all of those would-be pyramid explorers out there, here's an adventure tailor-made for you.

Best Sports Videogame
Hockey
(Activision, for the Atari VCS)

Sports-loving Atari owners have always had a tough time. With a few notable exceptions such as Tennis (Activision), Championship Soccer (Atari) and Bowling (Atari), the VCS cartridge library doesn't include a lot of first-rate sports games.

Things really turned around in 1982, however, with the publication of Hockey and the two Certificate of Merit winners in this category. Three superb team sport simulations in 12 months, that's worth a small celebration!

Although there are only a pair of skaters on each side in Hockey, the overall effect of the design is incredibly realistic. This cartridge has the authentic feel of actual rink action

The absence of any difficult to call penalties make it very tempting to use the checking feature to gain it up on the ice, but thoughtful design has insured that passing and strategy can overcome roughhouse tactics, just as Hockey purists would like to believe is the case in the NHL.

Certificate of Merit: *Football* (Mattel/M-Network, for the Atari VCS). This is the football cartridge Atari addicts have been dreaming about. Great programming has made it possible for human coaches to enter a wide variety of instructions using the joystick. For example, each lineman is programmed individually before every play in a process that takes no more than a few seconds

Certificate of Merit: *Baseball* (Mattel/M-Network, for the Atari VCS). While it's true that team in Baseball have one less player than in real life, it's also true that they have five more fielders than any previous Atari-compatible baseball cartridge. Each fielder is individually controllable, and there's plenty of hitting and pitching, too!

Most Humorous Home Arcade Game
Megamania
(Activision, for the Atari VCS)

Steve Cartwright has turned a bad dream into a great game. Megamania is based on the highly original concept that a space pilot has fallen asleep after a sort of cosmic Big Mac attack. While he slumbers at the control panel of his space cruiser, he has a nightmare in which all manner of junk — and junk food — attacks him. Megamania is that scary vision into an irrepressibly funny — and quite challenging — invasion game.

Once you're done laughing at the french fries, tires, hot dogs

MEGAMANIA

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and other 'monsters', be prepared for a top-notch arcade game featuring multiple attack waves, each with its own method of assaulting the beleaguered cannon at the bottom of the playfield. This would be a good cartridge even if it were absolutely straight, but the crazy humor raises it to classic status.

Certificate of Merit: *Fast Food* (Telesys, for the Atari VCS). There are gobble games and there are gobble games. And then, all by its lonesome, there is this completely nutty eat-it-all-on-the-fly action contest from yet another of those new independent software publishers. Watch out for those purple pickles!

Certificate of Merit: *Sneakers* (Sirius Software, for the Apple II). Mark Turmell, the young string bean who designed this multi-screen invasion game, is a wizard at the drawing table. His computer characters have the charm and charisma you'd expect to find in something created by Walt Disney. Yet the fun doesn't get in the way of what is a fine action contest that can give even the best arcade ace a workout.

Computer Game Division

Computer Game of the Year

David's Midnight Magic
(Broderbund, for the Apple II)

In the past, pinball and videogames have mixed about as well as oil and water. Bill Budge began to change this state of affairs with *Raster Blaster* in 1981, and now David Snider has completed the video pinball revolution with this brilliant electronic flipper table. *David's Midnight Magic* is more than just a realistic pinball simulation, it is a great pinball simulation. It has a table good enough that, if it were translated into an orthodox pinball machine, could hold its own against just about anything on the commercial arcades' pinball row.

Midnight Magic electronically simulates a two-level pinball machine with extra flippers on the upper portion and a "magic save" ball capture feature guarding the side drain alleys. Other features include drop targets, a kick-hole and the possibility of multi-ball play.

The greatness of this program is that the designer was not content to merely ape pinball. Instead, he has produced a pinball simulation that is also a fine videogame.

Certificate of Merit: *Bandits* (Sirius Software, for the Apple

DAVID'S MIDNIGHT MAGIC

II). The assorted hordes of aliens attacking your base on the moon aren't just trying to blast everything in sight, they're scavengers who are also trying to loot the place! That's the idea behind this colorful multi-screen invasion game created by the brothers for Sirius. The need to stop the bandits from spiriting away the goodies gives this first disk a unique feel, making it much more than "just another invasion game".

Certificate of Merit: *Castle Wolfenstein* (Muse Software, for the Apple II). Can you, as an allied officer captured by the dreaded Nazis, escape from the fortress with a whole skin and the secret war plans? That's the setting and goal of one of the most unusual action adventures ever created. Designer Silas Warner, who provides the voices for the German-speaking guards, has concocted a game that will test both reflexes and brain-matter to the limit.

Best Computer Adventure

Deadline
(Infocom, for the Apple II)

The company that thrilled fantasy-lovers with its *Zork I* & II turned to the subject of the murder-mystery as the inspiration for this absorbing text adventure in which the player takes the role of a detective with a mere 12 hours to solve the riddle of an apparent suicide that could be the result of foul play.

Deadline introduces several excellent innovations to the computer adventure field, including letting the player communicate with the computer in natural, full-sentence commands rather than in the traditional two-word phrases. Another advance is that the computer-controlled characters have an unusual amount of personality and act independently of what the player/detective is doing at any moment within the game.

Even the packaging for *Deadline* sets new standards. The game comes in an evidence case that includes pictures of the room in which the body was discovered, actual physical evidence you can hold in your hand, and reports from various people involved in the preliminary investigation that preceded the start of the game.

Certificate of Merit: *Time Zone* (On-Line Systems, for the Apple II). This multi-disk illustrated adventure is the magnum opus from the folks who are largely responsible for perfecting the hi-res adventure. In this one, the would-be hero must venture through many different ages, having plenty of adventures along the way, to complete the overall quest.

Certificate of Merit: *Kabul Spy* (Sirius Software, for the Apple II). International intrigue is the mainspring for this illustrated adventure in which the player must venture in the wilds of Afghanistan to keep a brilliant scientist from falling into the hands of the "other side". *Kabul Spy* treats electronic enthusiasts to plenty of thrills and dangers, laced with the merest touch of offbeat humor.

Best SF/Fantasy Computer Game

Star Warrior
(Automated Simulations, for the Atari)

This Arcade Award winner somehow combines the *oomph* of an arcade game with the depth of an action/adventure. The gamer is a fury, a man or woman of the far future who is sworn to bring retribution to those who have tromped on the helpless with hobnailed boots. In this particular adventure, the player can select from two associated missions. The player can elect to pursue a search-and-destroy operation as a diversion from an attempt to assassinate a tyrant on the planet Fornax or else take on this even more perilous task personally.

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J.W. Connelly has done quite an excellent job of producing a quick-playing, interesting interesting contest set against this background. Each Fury wears a futuristic battle suit with all sorts of powers and ability, including flight, and the human player has some choice as to what attributes this battle armor will possess in each run-through.

Certificate of Merit: *Empire I* (Edu-Ware, for the Apple II). This illustrated adventure with animated sequences is the first disk of an ambitious trilogy that will form an epic on the scale of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series of science fiction novels. The first game involves the people who went forth to colonize the stars and built the empire in the process. *Empire* is a very demanding game, but those with patience and fortitude will reap the reward of many hours of gaming pleasure.

Certificate of Merit: *Caverns of Mars* (Atari, for the Atari 400/800) The path to the heart of the enemy's base is long and winding, but the player's spacecraft can combine firepower and careful steering to run this gauntlet, destroy the control center and escape. This program won an award from Atari and moved from the APX catalog to the company's regular line because of its outstanding merit. Credit Atari for its perception, for this thrilling vertically scrolling shoot-out is strictly top drawer.

Best Arcade/Action Computer Game

K-razy Shoot-out
(K-Byte, for the Atari 400/800)

The first ROM cartridge for the Atari computer systems produced by an independent publisher had the double distinction of also being one of the very best games produced for any computer in 1982. This maze shoot-out, though certainly a cousin of Stern's *Berzerk* comp-op, has a unique flavor all its own.

One of its best aspects is the detailed scoring summary which appears after the player has either completed a sector or lost the game. Destroying the robots which patrol the multi-segment maze isn't enough in *K-razy Shoot-out*, you've got to clear the rooms by exceeding a minimum amount of ammunition. That means that, though the blast brigade will have a roaring good time, the best scores will be compiled by players who mix a little savvy with their marksmanship.

Certificate of Merit: *Crossfire* (On-Line Systems, for the Atari 400/800) The company that gave us *Jawbreaker* last year does it again with this non-stop program that puts the arcade into peril from three sides. *Crossfire* is played on a grid that looks like a city map. The player must move and fire constantly in order to snag the attackers while avoiding the trap of deadly crossfires.

K-RAZY SHOOT-OUT

Certificate of Merit: *Star Blazer* (Broderbund, for the Apple II) Tony Suzuki has solidified his reputation as one of the great creators of computer games with the release of this multi-screen scrolling shoot-out. This program would win universal acclaim for its scintillating graphics, fantastic bursts of intricate detail, even if it didn't also command respect for its absorbing mix of brain-teasing puzzle and all-out action. *Star Blazer* is a classic.

Best Solitaire Computer Game

Snack Attack
(Data Most, for the Apple II)

The maze-chase game offers players a whale of a good time as they scoot around four different mazes. Although *Snack Attack's* play mechanic is more than a little reminiscent of a "Certain Other Gobble Game", the quartet of mazes and the unusual sound and graphics set it apart.

SNACK ATTACK

It's the variety of action that makes this such an enjoyable one-player contest. Rather than endlessly repeating the same maze again and again, each challenges the gamer in a different way. That's the kind of thing that keeps boredom from overtaking you when you're all alone with your gaming computer.

Snack Attack is a "must buy" for anyone who wants to have a rollicking good time with their Apple II.

Certificate of Merit: *Omega Race* (Commodore, for the VIC-20) This cartridge earns the distinction of being the first program for the VIC-20 system to win an Arcade Award Certificate of Merit. It's a virtually exact duplication of the exciting com-op space game, playable with either joystick or paddle.

Certificate of Merit: *Neptune* (Gebelli Software, for the Apple II) All-time great designer Nasir—remember *Gorgon?*—takes the scrolling shoot-out underwater in this submarine combat contest. Some dangers must be blasted, others can only be avoided in order to get your craft through this aquatic obstacle course.

Best Computer Sports Game

Cypher Bowl
(Atari, for the Atari 400/800)

The publication of this arcade-style football game ended a long drought for pigskin game partisans who own Atari computers

Not only was Cypher Bowl the very first football game released for the 400/800, but it went far toward satisfying the yearnings of those arcaders who have felt the lack of a decent football simulation.

The heart of the game program is the marvelously inventive control system. Players use the joysticks to program an almost unbelievable range of offensive and defensive options in a manner that makes Cypher Bowl nearly as easy to learn as it is fun to play.

Certificate of Merit: Football Strategy (Avalon Hill, for several systems). The cerebral side of Football is the main concern of this electronic version of one of Avalon Hill's most popular sports boardgames. Offensive and defensive coaches can pick from an enviable list of possible plays and coverages, with the computer cross-indexing the selections to arrive at the on-the-field result.

Certificate of Merit: Juggler (IDSI, for the Apple II). Juggling may not be a true sport, but it is certainly a feat that requires athletic prowess and supreme concentration. This delightful program captures the feeling of balancing a half-dozen objects in the air at the same time, while calling upon the player to both think and move quickly.

Best Computer Audio/Visual Effects

Night Mission
(SubLogic, for the Apple II)

When SubLogic announced it was about to produce a pinball simulation, the company meant every word of it, literally. This program looks, sounds and plays exactly like a coin-op flipper game, right down to including the video equivalent of inserting a quarter into the coin slot!

Night Mission is a rarity in that many of its parameters are modifiable by the user — and there's no call for a lot of programming knowledge to accomplish such adjustments. Sounds can be speeded up or lengthened in duration, the visual representation of the ball can be altered to produce more or fewer "shadow" images and much, much more

Night Mission is designed around the theme of a World War II night bombing run, and the sounds and visuals put the concept across in an entertaining and forceful manner. Night Mission is a monument to creative audio/visual programming.

Certificate of Merit: Choplifter (Broderbund, for the Apple II). Several recent computer and videogame programs have utilized the concept of having the arcader pilot an attack helicopter. None has done a better job of giving the player the feel of actually being at the controls of a whirlybird than Choplifter. The three-dimensionality of the helicopter must be seen to be believed.

Certificate of Merit: Preppie (Scott Adams International, for most major systems). Scott Adams, aren't they the guys who do all those adventure games without the pictures? Nope, not any more. Not only do the newest adventures have very nice high-res graphics, but this arcade-style contest is one of the most charming you'll ever see. Here's your chance to watch a preppie bite the dust in glorious color.

Most Innovative Computer Game

Moonbase Io
(PDI, for the Atari 400/800)

When the Atari computer systems appeared, everyone noticed that a tape cassette machine could be connected to the console at the same time as a disk drive, but no one took advantage of the fact until PDI produced this three-scenario space game.

The first inkling that this program is something new and different comes immediately after you "boot it". A real voice contacts you in your ship and verbally explains the situation. A cassette provided along with the actual game disk adds the element of voice to this diverting arcade-style program. And when the Presdent himself comes on the ship's radio to congratulate you on the successful completion of your mission, it gives the skilled player quite a jolt of satisfaction.

Certificate of Merit: Nautilus (Synapse Software, for Atari 400/800). Split-screen graphics are the outstanding innovation in this game covering naval warfare between hunting submarines and destroyers. This feature makes **Nautilus** one of the most involving pieces of game software to appear this year.

Certificate of Merit: The Arcade Machine (Broderbund, for the Apple II). It's not a game per se; we're stretching a point, because of **The Arcade Machine's** unusual merit. Using the skillfully written instruction book, it is possible for even a non-programmer to create a professional-quality, machine language invasion game in a relatively short period of time. The system is surprisingly flexible within its limitations, and the truly inventive will be able to enliven their creations with all kinds of engaging graphic touches.

Coin-Op Videogame Awards

Coin-Op Game of the Year

Tron
(Midway)

It's four, four, four games in one! And the best part's that all of them are entertaining enough that each could've been rolled onto the floors of the nation's fun palaces in separate cabinets and probably done well. **Tron** ties the four contests together in one superb package that offers a little something for everyone, no matter what kind of arcade contest you prefer.

This Arcade Award winner is, of course, based on the Disney movie of the same name. It does an excellent job of picking key moments from the film and translating them into game terms. You can race light cycles, battle against the tanks, fight your way through the hordes to reach the I/O tower and blast apart the

TRON

barrier keeping you from a final showdown with the MCP (who does not actually enter into direct confrontation with the player in this machine).

Everything about Tron screams quality. From the varied play action to the scintillating graphics, Tron bears the unmistakable stamp of a coin-op classic.

Certificate of Merit: *Ms. Pac-Man* (Midway) How do you improve on the most popular coin-op gobble game? Midway's sequel to Pac-Man pulls off this neat trick by brightening the playfield colors, replacing the original labyrinth with several new ones and introducing the ol' gobbler's female counterpart. Many arcade aces even prefer this one to the original!

Certificate of Merit: *Donkey Kong* (Nintendo). The story of Mario and his attempts to rescue his girl friend from the clutches of the giant ape should by now be familiar to every electronic gamer. The coin-op provides multi-screen action dressed up with some of the cutest animation ever seen on a pay-for-play videogame.

Best Action Coin-Op Game

Robotron
(Williams)

This "back to basics" sequel to *Defender* and *Stargate*, neither of which is any slouch, has the kind of dynamic on-screen movement that arcaders once could only dream about back in the days when Space Invaders was still the greediest quarter-snatcher in game-land. The player's on-screen character begins the game at the exact center of the playfield. From there on, you've got to use the dual joystick controls to continuously move and fire at the enemies closing in from all sides. (Some of the attackers, on the other hand, are so powerful that they must simply be avoided at all costs.)

ROBOTRON

One of the best things about Robotron is that, amid all the shooting, the arcader has a humanitarian mission to perform: rescuing the human captives before they are taken over by the robots. This balances the all-out action and gives a sense of purpose to the super-duper blast-orama.

Certificate of Merit: *Frenzy* (Stern). Though novice sequels are generally pale imitations of the film that inspired the follow-up, the same can hardly be said about coin-op sequels. This deluxe enhancement of the maze-shoot-out theme Stern pioneered with *Berzerk* is an outstanding action game. The addition of the concept of different types of maze barriers gives *Frenzy* its unique feel while opening up a wealth of strategic possibilities.

Best Science Fiction/Fantasy Coin-Op Game

Bosconian
(Midway)

If you like space games, this machine provides the kind of action that is guaranteed to keep you glued to the controls. Your job is to battle giant space stations while avoiding incidental menaces like mines and fighters. Each station has six huge pods which can be knocked out one at a time, or you can try for a quick knockout by zapping the central hub in this eight-direction scrolling contest.

Your ship is well-equipped to handle this assignment, however. It can fire fore and aft simultaneously, allowing the arcader to turn the tables on a fighter squadron attempting to catch your ship in a crossfire. Another aid is a secondary display that lets you know the positions of the enemy space stations.

Certificate of Merit: *Zaxxon* (Sega/Gremlin). Once players stopped gaping at the graphics of this three-dimensional, multi-scenario space war extravaganza, they found there was one heck of a good game there, too. It isn't easy to learn how to steer your fighter through the barriers of the sky fortress or control it effectively in deep space situations, but Zaxxon is a real treat for the senses.

Zaxxon is a multi-playfield space combat tour de force that requires the player to constantly evade enemy fire while lining up deadly strafing runs

Certificate of Merit: *Gorf* (Atari) The manufacturer has dubbed this space-themed adventure "the player's game" and it easily lives up to the billing. As Gravitar, pirate and rebel of the red galaxy, you must blast your way to the very core of the evil Red Planet to fulfill your cosmic destiny. Each encounter is like a separate game in and of itself, making Gravitar perhaps the most severe strategic test in the entire arcade.

Most Innovative Coin-Op Game

Tempest
(Atari)

In an arcade full of maze games, scrolling shoot-outs and invasion games, Tempest stands out as a totally unique coin-op machine. The vector graphics contest is a semi-abstract target game with a science fiction theme that has the player shooting from the edge of the playfield toward the center rather than the other way around.

Because of its precedent-breaking graphic treatment, this high-skill contest will never be confused with any other game in the amusement center. Another good feature is that it is easy for a neophyte to get into, but then becomes challenging enough to keep the arcade aces whirling their shooters around in the field for hours on end

Certificate of Merit: *Lady Bug* (Universal). The addition of turnstiles to the labyrinth changes Lady Bug from "just another maze chase" into a fascinating contest packed with strategic nuances never before equaled in this particular genre of coin-op. Other features, such as the "special" and "extra" bonuses, are inspired borrowings from the pinball world. Put them all together, and you've got a jewel of a quarter-snatcher

Certificate of Merit: *Qix* (Taito). The company that gave the world *Space Invaders* — and would the arcades have boomed without it? — went into unexplored territory with this abstract game of lines and areas. Admittedly not for every taste, Qix is an intellectually stimulating game that has caused the creation of a whole genre of territory contests.

Best Coin-Op Game
Audio/Visual Effects

Turbo
(Sega/Gremlin)

Just when you think a genre of an electronic game is getting played out, along comes something as fresh and inventive as **Turbo** to prove that great design work knows no such barriers. There've been many, many driving games in family fun centers — and in the penny arcades which preceded them — but nothing can compare to this multi-scenario roadway classic.

Truly, it's the graphics that raise *Turbo* from being a very good machine to the status of all-time great. There's nothing quite like the feel of holding the wheel in your hand, flooring the gas and zooming over hill and dale in this first-person driving game. *Turbo* has justifiably earned its reputation as the driving contest that even people who hate driving contests adore.

Certificate of Merit: *Thief* (*Pacific Novelty*) The visuals are good in this maze-chase, but it earns its award with the sound track. The sound can pursuing your thief character are constantly getting advice from the dispatcher, heavily laden with sarcasm when you're doing an especially good job of eluding them.

Certificate of Merit: *Kick-Man* (*Midway*) The illusion of three-dimensional perspective coupled with charming rendering of the clown on the unicycle makes this juggling game a delight to the eye. And Pac-Man, who makes a special guest appearance, has never looked better in his electronic life.

Stand-Alone Game Awards

Stand-Alone
Game of the Year

Galaxian
(Coleco)

Most electronic gamers don't have the space, much less the ready cash, to buy a full-size Midway **Galaxian** machine for their homes. This tabletop unit, licensed by Midway, may well be the next best thing. Certainly, this year's Arcade Award winner does an incredible job of capturing the feel of the original coin-op in this pint-sized package.

SCRAMBLE STAND-ALONE

Coleco just plain did it right. The housing of the game is sturdy and attractive, and it gives the unit the look of a real coin-op. The bright display screen is easy to study during play, and the delicate matrixing technique yields images that are worthy of such concentration.

You say you're not satisfied yet and you still want more? How about a couple of bonus games, **Head-to-Head Galaxian** and **Midway Invaders?** Many other companies might have made hand-helds out of both of them, but here they're just icing on the cake.

Certificate of Merit: *Scramble* (*Tomytronic*). Talk about games you can't put down! This tabletop **Scramble**, with its multi-scenario play, colorful graphics and responsive controls is absolutely habit-forming. Clever design work makes the most of the device's capabilities. *Scramble* is without a doubt one of the two or three best stand-alone games ever produced.

Certificate of Merit: *Super Cobra* (*Entex*) This must be the Year of the Scrolling Shoot-Out, because here's another absolutely wonderful arcade-to-tabletop translation of a popular title in this action-packed genre.

Best Electronic
Boardgame

Electronic Stratego
(M.B. Electronics)

Stratego has always had a special niche as a non-electronic strategy-oriented boardgame. It is less daunting than a full-scale war game, yet offers features, such as pieces with hidden identities, not found in class contests like chess, checkers and reversi. The manufacturer has used modern electronics to make a great game even more fun to play.

Electronic Stratego is the original game — plus. The use of the game computer to moderate the outcome of each mini-battle preserves the secrecy of the pieces in a way that was impossible without such a robot judge, and the numerous battle sounds certainly establish the right ambience for this Napoleonic era game.

Certificate of Merit: *Fidelity Reversi Challenger* (*Fidelity Electronics*). Reversi has always seemed to be an ideal game for this electronic age, in that it's easy to learn, plays rapidly and yet is shot through with the kind of strategic possibilities that give a game staying power. The Reversi Challenger maximizes all these qualities to the nth degree, while also providing a ready and willing adversary for any player, no matter his or her level of skill.

Certificate of Merit: *Monopoly Playmaster* (*Parker Brothers*) If you're one of those Monopoly players who'd like to see the action speeded up a bit, **Monopoly Playmaster** is the answer to your prayers. This electronic enhancement to regular Monopoly makes the game go much faster while adding some new wrinkles — not to mention a dash of sound and color — to America's most popular money game.

Best Mini-Arcade
Game Cartridge

Scramble
(GCE, for the Vectrex)

This vector graphics version of Stern's famed coin-op is a true delight. Although the images are in black and white, the beautifully done overlay produces a very convincing illusion that the contest is taking place in color.

The responsiveness of the Vectrex joystick — not to mention the availability of a multi-button panel — make it possible to

PROGRAMMABLE PARADE

Attack the Enemy on Land and Sea!

COSMIC AVENGER
Coleco/ColecoVision

ColecoVision's **Cosmic Avenger** takes the graphically-exciting Universal coin-op and gives it a fully pleasing home treatment with the only simultaneous bomb and fire options possessed by any existing programmable cartridge.

Using what is becoming the standard Coleco technique of breaking up a videogame into three separate scenarios, ColecoVision offers a standard Scramble-style play mechanic, a tank track and an underwater sequence. This is the first time a system has offered separate control buttons for the laser cannon mounted at the front of the Avenger spacecraft and the bombs dropped from the underside of the craft. They can be launched at the same time or independently, as the gamer wishes.

The first scenario begins with the blaring of horns and sends the Avenger out over a mountainous landscape of surface-to-air missile silos and ground-to-air weaponry of all stripes. The game also offers, through the first two scenarios, a wild carol in the form of a frequently-reappearing (how frequently depends on which of the four difficulty settings is used) mystery ship

that must be destroyed. Flying is controlled via the joystick, with vertical movement totally free. Pushing the stick to the left (brakes) and right (speed) determines velocity. Even those whiz kids who manage to fly past the UFO will soon find that this

COSMIC AVENGER

little rascal is faster than your ship and can pursue you right off the playfield.

After completing the flight over the well-armed alien city, a tank sequence will follow in which the armored vehicles move over flat valleys and vast (but never very high) plateaus. The tanks fire round, spur-like projectiles and have a full-circle field of fire. The best tack is to hug the ground and leap-frog any missiles hurled your way in a straight, horizontal line.

Unfortunately, the mystery ships will screw up this approach several times during the course of the scenario. As soon as the UFO appears on-screen, climb to engage it. Failure to do so quickly will result in your ship getting caught in a withering crossfire. Since the UFO can fly at any altitude, it can come right down to ground level or hover at the top of the screen.

In fact, a clever pilot can work it so that the mystery ship is eliminated by the tanks. To do this, find a position and hold it steady for a period of sufficient length for the tank to draw a bead on you. Then descend, drawing the mystery ship down and, it is hoped, into a spinning tank-shell.

The final scenario is set in an underwater cavern and more closely resembles the labyrinth type shoot-outs such as **Super Cobra**. There are standard and heat-seeking missiles located at the bottom of the cavern and in little crannies along the top. Floating free are numerous weapons and underwater mines, which must be either evaded or destroyed. Completion of round three puts the gamer right

back at the beginning, but at a slightly elevated difficulty level.

Sound and graphics are stupendous, maybe even nicer than in the coin-op original. The trumpets, the explosions — crisp and clear above ground, muted while undersea — the whistling of a speeding heat-seeker, are all captured with remarkable precision. Visually, we are treated to only two or three scenarios but to such nice frills as the spotlight that lights up a broad arc over the alien city. *Cosmic Avenger* isn't any groundbreaker, but it's a fun-filled, magnificently rendered home videogame that all but shouts "state of the art". Highly recommended.

INFILTRATE
Apollo/Atari VCS

Now here's a genuine twist on the standard climbing contest — an elevator videogame! As might be expected from its title, Apollo's latest release is based on the successful infiltration of an enemy base filled to the gills with aliens. As in most climbing-oriented games, the play-action consists of a player moving through various levels of a broken series of horizontal lines. The on-screen character moves from level to level stepping onto what looks like hydraulically-actuated platforms which go up and down continuously.

The object is to reach the topmost level, snatch the "key" that waits there, and return it to the designated location at the base of the playfield. And then start climbing again.

The fly in the ointment? The elevators are no cinch to use, and there are hostile, weapon-toting aliens moving randomly through the corridors First off, the elevator must be boarded — by pushing the joystick in the desired direction — quite precisely. The moment the lift reaches the level on which the on-screen protagonist is waiting, the gamer must make his man hop on quickly, the same holding true for disembarking.

The more serious challenge is supplied by the free-roving aliens who are "manning" the complex playfield. The hero can fire his gun to the left or right of these nasties. Killing the space monsters earns extra points, but it isn't wise to hang around overlong in hopes of racking up a bundle of bonuses. Remember your ultimate goal and get the key down to the bottom of the complex as quickly as possible. Only confront those aliens who pose a direct and immediate threat to

PROGRAMMABLE PARADE

Attack the Enemy on Land and Sea!

COSMIC AVENGER

Colecovision

Colecovision's **Cosmic Avenger** sees the graphically exciting Universal start-up and pixel is fully presenting horde laden with the only selected scenario and lay any exciting programmatical cartridge.

Using what is honouring the standard Coleco line-up of beeping up a video game into flavor enjoyable for anyone wanting to start a whole. With this game **Cosmic Avenger** you can marshal a tank, boat and an armoured missile carrier to create different situations of obstacle for the laser cannon-mounted at the front of the first or the second part in which to prove the opponent is the worst.

The first season begins with the making of boats and seats the water enables you to find a selection of surface to an innocent flying car to your own aircraft. Be warned this is a two scenario, a wild care — the longer your second chance at diminishing endlessly rescues that the difficulty setting is well matching that

that must be destroyed. Flying a controlled so the system will vertical movement while first shooting the appropriate target and then I speed, determines velocity (two those with tank wits manage to fly your shooting at the first part and come to a standstill.

Unfortunately the mystery ships will come up the aquarium second times during the course of the concourse — as soon as the aircraft come into existence and you're in a war with the ever increasing number of ships an enemy's second screen climb to acquire a floating to hit when this slow and up to hit only can disturb the second a lot, and since the one cannot get down to ground level but in a safe from these low flying craft — the first scenario is one instead, a low floating enemy show over. If a high one floats in to fire at you, remember, tanks cannot get down to ground level on with these but it's simply a matter of speeding over the low and firing

back at the beginning. All of a slightly elevated difficulty level.

There's good graphics, car imaginative, negative laser over than that at the numbers. The very opposite of the opponents — step and further aces — the sparkles of a gambling feed an a surface of the captured with of moveable prove too many. Virtually so and breaks not only to these scenarios but to such into this is the spot to that 'a coin this movement is ship Cosmic Avenger isn't any proud of number but I is a fun filled exciting, shooting cartridge with a fewer expenses that all but sheds state of the art - highly recommended.

INFILTRATE

Amiddition VCS

Now here is a genuine twist on the standard shooting game — an enemy within, with the only and trap some aces but here to aim shooter a nice over a second infiltrator of an enemy invader in an aptly named

which go up and down continuously. Thus want to reach the topmost level and you the of first a safe disappear from the range of enemy fire but should be loaded on the knot at the disappearing of the control as the shown on the part of a row second seconds. Move through to fire at one of these levels and to stop over on top of the ridges — but the inside an as we see but are two of these with levels as though — and so on to the end over and only they out as well.

To avoid being blown sky is an error the lifts and you must move wait, but he for the very game sending to shoot, also from an end to up one lift to change the only as a lot and as the ship to but the shows you must lift move is the last fleet which reaches bottom will come back up with making the game next make to men best an ending the same lifting that for every other going out to it, and

gift, with aliens, stay you're find, the real opponents game, the lift play is there's also bonus several a hanger sink though rescue tend of a button on nix offerable find. The fly aim a trick up the a safe man aiming if gave these small all the make aim but a the boost. And when you as fastest, weapon hits, as a many show of means bon and there is, you — so once in a while weapon buttons more button must is costly the never been on the same screen each go out ahead on top of the go out the fast aim bon to the limber a right and a ship in a but the shows the hunter of such strike off the missile must be boarded - by pushing the pushes a the with of the move a on whenever the to the need for at but the shoots. Only this will must the limbs the must on a with off the are down cover the over which on a up and down different amount to a find the make bonus, the bonuses are the bonus hours could be city them but on buddy for every inner to the bonus and of this that's and that and only it in be left, reserves the fume of a seven second. Remember there on a does and makeover time, as one and are down of lock same on are shit a shot if on a down a shit own a and shit on a.

the infiltrator's fire. The game gives you three at the start of play, but all are equally precious.

The graphics, while not of the stand-up-and-cheer variety, are quite sufficient. The illusion of a multi-level command station being secretly penetrated is portrayed in clear, schematic form, with the human spy and alien adversaries rendered in standard VCS-style block-graphics. The audio is complimentary but not outstanding. The play action is precise but smooth.

Infiltrate is the best action contest

INFILTRATE

we've seen from Apollo since **Space Cavern**, and may well be the strongest title in their entire line. An entirely entertaining and offbeat approach to the typical climb-the-ladder videogame and maze shoot-out, blending the two with considerable effect. Well worth a look.

NEXAR
Spectravision/Atari VCS

Nexar offers an entirely novel approach to the space shoot-out, utilizing a play mechanic that most closely resembles, if you can imagine, **Tempest** without lines. This free-form technique is attained by applying a heavy center of gravity to the playfield so that every shot fired by the player-controlled weapon heads directly for the middle of the screen.

Alien ships and weapons hurtle toward the player's cannon at increasingly faster speeds, all issuing from that central focal point. In order to destroy these pieces of alien armament, therefore, they must be lined up between the cannon and the middle of the playfield. Periodically, especially vital pieces of this supply convoy emerge in the form of beacons, which are rectangular solids. Accompanied

by a klaxon-like alert buzzer, these three-dimensional objects should not be allowed to escape off the border of the screen, even at the cost of several lesser targets.

Nexar also presents a most interesting concept; the fourth level can only be reached through pure merit. Levels one through four are arranged according to difficulty, the fourth beginning what the manufacturer believes is the only legitimate Nexar challenge. Only game options one, two and three can be reached through manual play selection, however, as the program demands the player prove himself worthy of facing the actual contest.

After finishing off the third wave, therefore, the designation "Nexar 3" begins to roll off the playfield and is replaced by "Nexar 4". From the very first, however, the game will certainly prove challenging as arcaders strive to line up a shot, fire, and then quickly move on to the next target. The Nexar Challenge is apt to remain an unseen mystery for most players, who will find the third practice level a more-than-sufficient test of hand-eye coordination.

Graphically, Nexar offers some pleasing, if spare, visuals and clean object-movement on-screen. Attackers grow larger as they move toward the perimeter of the playfield, making bigger targets even as it becomes more difficult to actually hit them. The audio is complimentary and more than adequate. This is not only the most successful cartridge Spectravision has yet produced, but one of the truly original home programmable videogames on the market. Recommended.

SUPER CHALLENGE FOOTBALL
Mattel M-Network/Atari VCS

Over the years, one of the weaknesses of the line-up of VCS-compatible games is the lack of a good football game. The product tries valiantly with its vertically-oriented gridiron, but all the flickering in the movement and somewhat clunky graphics left pigskin game lovers far from satisfied.

Mattel, meanwhile, has carved an enviable reputation, creating electronic sports simulations. Now the company has decided to go after the huge VCS cartridge market with its M-Network entries. Not surprisingly, one title in the first group of releases is **Super-Challenge Football**.

Also not surprisingly, Mattel's de-

WE HOPPED FROGGER™ OUT OF THE ARCADE. NOW CAN YOU HOP HIM HOME?

Frogger has just jumped out of the arcades and into your home. Sights, sounds, and all. Do you have the skill to get him to his home?

Frogger's first challenge is to cross a highway where reckless hot rods hurtle by, and huge trucks go thundering in his path. Every safe jump in this maze of motor and metal is a crucial step home.

Beyond is the raging river where safety of a slippery log or diving turtle is all Frogger can count on to stay afloat.

Frogger's last leap to his lily pad home must be perfect, or it's back to the road to try again. Good luck. Frogger's counting on you.

For your Atari Video Computer System™ and the Sears Video Arcade.™

PARKER BROTHERS

signers have surmounted enough of the VCS' limitations to produce a first-rate eletronic football game. While this cartridge still can't compare with Mattel's NFL Football for the Intellivision, it sure fills a void for Atarians.

This two-player contest puts five men on the field for each team. There's no kicking game as such, so each possession at the beginning of a half or after a score begins on the team's own 20 yard line. Approximately 20 yards of the field is visible on the screen at a time, though it scrolls to follow the action. This provides a lot more room to maneuver than a non-scrolling field, which is a real benefit if you are addicted to the passing game.

The cartridge's most innovative aspect is the manner in which each player enters his coaching instruction on every play. A simple system of joystick commands lets the coaches individually program every on-screen athlete on both offense and defense. By orchestrating the blocking assignments, it is possible to clear a hole in front of your ball-toting quarterback and pile up big yardage on the ground, for example.

Passing is handled more or less the same way as in most other football videogames. Before the play, the offensive coach picks one man to be the primary reciever. After the ball is hiked to the quarterback, hitting the action button causes the passer to hurl the pigskin in the direction of this receiver. As soon as the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, joystick control switches to the would-be catcher so that you can guide him to the right spot to make the reception.

The presence of the scrolling feature helps cure a problem that has bothered several other football cartridges—what to do when a runner or receiver gets behind all the defenders in the open field. In Super-Challenge Football, you can move one of the defenders off the right edge of the screen (as appropriate) and then have him reappear on the opposite edge. That means, you can almost al-

ways manage to get one lineman in position to try to stop the ball carrier before he can cross the goal line.

Super-Challenge Football is sure to score a touchdown.

FROGGER

Parker Bros./Atari VCS

Translating popular coin-op videogames into the home medium, particularly the VCS format, has proven one of the most formidable challenges of this decade. While some games have proven "naturals" for home translation, many have simply defied the programmers' best efforts to bring them to the 2600 screen.

FROGGER

Frogger, designed for the VCS by Ed English for Parker Brothers, is a surprise of the most pleasant variety. The home version has all the action, color and special features beloved of arcaders — snakes, bonus flies, crocodiles — and then some. For the first time on a 2600 program, gamers are treated to the wonders of two-part harmony as the familiar Frogger theme tinkles and chimes along in the background.

There are several game variations,

but the play alteration that will most intrigue arcaders concerns the use of the difficulty switches. On the "A" setting, players will face a virtual duplicate of the coin-op. The frog begins his odyssey at the base of the playfield. Under the complete control of the player, the frog can leap up, down, left or right and must traverse the entire playfield until reaching one of the five empty grottos awaiting him and his fellow froggies.

The bottom half of the playfield is a highway, with blaring, beeping trucks and cars moving in different directions at a variety of speeds. Keeping in mind that the little green jumper can go backward as well as forward, he must be maneuvered through the labyrinth of vehicles to the crosswalk at the center of the screen. As the timer ticks down — and, in later rounds, as deadly snakes slither across this divider, the frog must be guided over a watery surface. The trip across the sea is accomplished by jumping from one to another of the various objects that float along the playfield. Logs, turtles and even orcs can be used as sailing vessels, but care must be taken. Logs are always safe, but at the "A" setting, any logs hitting either the left or right side of the field while froggie sits atop it will result in instant "amphibian squash". At the easier, "B" setting, frogs can scroll off-screen until the time runs down. This ability to ride off one side of the playfield and appear again at the other makes picking up the bonus flies that appear randomly in the empty grottos extremely easy picking.

The graphics are quite clear, with surprisingly little RAM "flicker", except when the lady frog appears on screen. This bonus character may be escorted to safety for extra points by the player's frog by simply picking her up off the log on which

she is invariably found lolling. Once the white lady disappears, the screen returns to normal.

Each time the five grottos are filled with frogs, the next rack appears. Each new round challenges players with faster-moving and more numerous vehicles, more crocodiles and, in every other rack, hungry crocs wait in the empty grottos in lieu of flies. Hit a crocodile head and that's all for your frog.

Then there are the diving turtles. Turtles make fine jumping-off points for fast-moving froggies, but when they turn blue, watch out. This is the signal that these turtles will, without warning, head straight underwater — taking the poor little guy with them.

All in all, Parker Brothers' *Frogger* is an excellent cartridge, one of the best VCS-compatible videogames to emerge in a year of fantastic game programs. Ed English's work deserves a medal, if only for the feat of wringing that marvelous music out of the VCS. But there's a lot more here than just music. This is the game that plays true meaning to Kermit's oft-sung lament.
"It Isn't Easy To Be Green"

BERZERK
Atari/Atari VCS

When Atari announced plans to produce a home edition of the well-known Stern maze shoot-out, *Berzerk*, skepticism ran rampant throughout the electronic gaming world. The basic situation — an on-screen hero shoots at computer-directed robots as the arcader moves from room to room — sounded like it might be hard to reproduce, given the limitations of the VCS hardware. Besides, Atari hadn't done such a masterful job on *Pac-Man*, its previous attempt to translate a prominent maze game for home-screen play. Those disappointed by *Pac-Man* (VCS) adopted an understandably cautious, wait-and-see attitude toward *Berzerk*.

Atari has done an effective job of satisfying the doubters in the audience by publishing a highly enjoyable version of *Berzerk* that packs all the spine-tingling action found in the Stern

original. In fact, this is one of the best arcade-to-home translations any company has produced thus far.

Credit a subtle piece of programming ingenuity for the cartridge's success. Although the VCS isn't capable of moving more than four objects around the screen simultaneously without causing telltale flickering, *Berzerk* looks rock steady, despite frequently having more objects than that on the screen at the same time. What the anonymous designer did was have one batch of robots freeze for an instant while another batch moves to-

BERZERK

ward the on-screen hero with lethal intent. By flip-flopping movement very rapidly, it is possible to give the impression that everything on the screen is in constant motion. That's a nifty solution to what could have been a thorny problem.

Play is so close to the coin-op original that it almost seems overkill to describe the course of action. As in the arcade *Berzerk*, the player has a series of three on-screen representatives, available one at a time as the previous one is eliminated. This happens in one of four ways. The hero dies if he runs into a playfield boundary, collides with a robot, gets zapped by a laser blast or falls into the clutches of Evil Otto.

A variable number of computer-controlled robots inhabits each room. They constantly move in the general direction of the hero with lethal intent. After the first round is completed, the enemy metal men fire lasers, too, instead of just trying to ram. At the higher difficulty setting, Evil Otto also becomes a factor. When the arcader dawdles in any one room for too long, this sinister smile face appears at one of the edges of the playfield. It floats across the central portion of the screen, describing a zigzag course that ignores all walls and boundaries. Otto's touch is deadly to any robot or hero.

The best *Berzerk* strategy is one

Electronic Games 49

die is frenziedly biting. Once
the whole cup disappears the
screen returns to normal.

Then there are the d-i-ng
battles. Coffee mugs line up
and parrot to bat now-ing.
There but when they turn
from blue slant is 'm the dsc...

angled in fact this is one of the
few reader to fame translation any
company has produced thus far.

Given a certain amount of magnum-
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This is as close to the non-op edge
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The two second strategy mode
Continued on page 55

Prowess today 50

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THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO
CLIMBING GAMES

CLIMBING GAMES

A VIEW FROM THE GROUND

The story of the rising popularity of climbing games closely parallels the recent maze-chase craze. Certainly, maze-oriented games existed for years before the advent of Pac-Mania. In fact, Stan Jarocki, Midway's leading light, originally dismissed the Namco-created classic. After all, as he said at the time, "Nobody plays maze games anymore."

Several years ago, Universal, one of the most innovative of the small con-op com-

panies, introduced a game titled **Space Panic.** The first major videogame to utilize a ladder-climbing play mechanic, Space Panic never became the smash hit it deserved to be. Nonetheless, the game developed a cult following and can be found in even small arcades to this day.

Today, climbing contests are established as one of the major genres in the videogame universe. They often use elements of the maze chase games, but the differences are usually more important than the similarities.

Going up?

DONKEY KONG: AN APE FOR ALL SEASONS

Just as Pac-Man was the game that broke the maze-chase held wide open, Nintendo's **Donkey Kong** was the watershed climbing contest. When Coleco announced that it was bringing out home versions of the famous monkey chase not only for its own ColecoVision, but in VCS and Intellivision-compatible formats as well, there was considerable joy in Gameville. With the further news that purchasers of ColecoVision would receive the ColecoVi-

sion version packed into the case, pandemonium erupted.

Is Coleco crazy? Retailers and gamers alike began to wonder why any company would give away the hottest home title in the field, but upon first playing the game on the "third wave system", all was made clear as an azure sky. ColecoVision's Donkey Kong is not only the finest starter cartridge ever offered by a videogame company, it is also the finest showcase a system ever had. All the graphic advantages of which Coleco had boasted — including the "barrel", "bolts" and "ele-

DONKEY KONG

DONKEY KONG (MALLET SEQUENCE)

HEIGHTS!

MONKEY JUMP (WAVEMAKERS)

vator" playfields — were present in all their full-color, Nintendo glory.

The first scenario is the familiar introductory playfield in which Donkey Kong (Japanese for a gorilla who is somewhat dim-witted) rolls batches of barrels down a sequence of slanting girders. Mario, the brave little hero of the saga, must scale these treacherous steel rods and reach his girl friend who has been captured by the ape.

Time ticks down from the moment the game begins. The player who reaches the top of this playfield receives, as his point total, the amount of remaining time (in addition

— obviously — to any points for either jumping or smashing barrels). In scenario two, Mario must remove the six bolts that hold together the second segment of this skeletal building, while avoiding the intelligent flame creatures who haunt this level.

Scenario three, the most challenging, has Mario jumping on and off elevators to isolated sections of girder. The flames are back again, and only the very best players will complete this entire ordeal at the higher skill levels. Beyond this point, the game returns to the second scenario and repeats that and the final phase in endless alternation.

The VCS and Intellivision versions don't come close to the level of graphic sophistication attained in the ColecoVision edition, though both play quite well. The VCS version has a cleaner look than one might expect, while the Intellivision Donkey Kong

is considerably cruder.

These alternate versions have two playfields instead of the three found in the ColecoVision model.

In fact, now that Nintendo has "released" a sequel to their climbing classic, dubbed Donkey Kong Jr., it shouldn't be long before we see home versions of that. Let's hope so, for the big guy's sake.

ELEVATORS OF DEATH!

Apollo's Infiltrate game is a most intriguing hybrid of climbing contest and blast-'em-up fun. Rather than scaling the ladders found in most climbing-oriented types of videogames, the player surrogate rides a series of elevators to the top of the screen where the key he needs to complete the contest is found. Once you've recovered the prize, change direction and head back down the playfield to the lowest level. Here, at the base of the screen, is the real target. Taking the key to the indicated location at the bottom of the field unlocks the door for bonus points and sends the adventure onto the next level.

Infiltrate is one of the most creative variants on the standard climbing contest, not only to the elevators — which must be targeted precisely in order to catch a ride — but to

the gaggle of goblins that patrol the multi-layered game screens.

Elevators can take the secret agent one or more levels up or down, but again, the control must be remarkably precise in order to board and disembark from these transport machines.

The wild card here is the presence of armed monsters who stalk the corridors and ride the elevators freely. The ghoulies patrol-patterns can result in some unbelievably exciting shoot-outs. Bullets

bounce off moving elevators, monsters attempt to surround your secret agent and, at full cry, the contest is a pulse-pounding chase scene complete with guns blazing, pursuing monsters and last second success — or failure.

After capturing the prize at the top of the playfield, many players like to dawdle a bit up there, hanging out against the far left or right wall. Finger ready on the trigger, the arcader simply sits and waits for the stubborn bloodhound-like guardians to grab an "up" elevator all the way up. Then — blam! — and another one bites the dust. At this point, frustrations sated, the on-screen hero can zip down-screen with a smile on his face.

Infiltrate has just a single playfield, but between the elevators and monstrous hall guardians there is more than enough going on to keep players from getting tired of it.

For a new slant on the climbing game genre, Infiltrate makes it to the top — and back.

CLIMBING FOR AIR!

Data Age, a new name in the ever-proliferating software parade, has included among their debut titles another innovative change of pace on the climbing game.

Like Donkey Kong, there is a jumping function and, as in Apollo's Infiltrate, the hero moves from level to level via a network of elevators, located at the left and right sides of the game's playfield.

Amazingly, however, Airlock, as the game is called, is not really similar to either of those contests.

The scenario involves a hero trapped in a chamber patrolled by alien-designed robots, who move more quickly at each successive level. With a 10-second time clock ticking away, the arcader must maneuver his surrogate over obstacles and robots (whose touch stuns rather than kills, the protagonist, rendering him immobile for several precious seconds to the far end of the corridor and the awaiting airlock/elevator.

Opening the airlock chamber, however, requires a pair of keys, one at each end of the hallway. The keys are suspended from the ceiling, and the human must jump in order to snatch one. After the pair of keys are secured, the on-screen hero must enter the airlock and touch the back of the wall, thus sealing the hatchway door and sending the elevator to the next highest level.

Ironically, this is one of those rare games where it gets easier as you go along. The lowest corridor is the most treacherous, since it requires the gamer to change directions and avoid a particularly nasty little robot. From the second stratum on, the good arcader will develop a routine pattern of snatching the nearest key, leaping blockades and robots in a smooth, non-stop sprint, leaping for the second key and slamming into the airlock's wall.

Only the ever-increasing speed of the robots creates a significant challenge at the higher levels. With a mere 10 seconds to complete a corridor, even a single stun can prove fatal.

As the player navigates each level, it instantaneously fills with a non-breathable liquid. A player who fails to clear the screen sees his failure

cutely illustrated as a sinking submarine appears on-screen.

Airlock has another curious play mechanic that will either turn you on or off depending upon your videogame world view. Gamers who successfully reach the top of the playfield win. That's right, w-i-n. This one's unlike the vast majority of games in this genre, in which even the most skillful player is sent up against tougher and tougher challenges until he eventually fails. For gamers who enjoy the thrill of completing a play

LOCK-4

sequence successfully and hearing the blare of trumpets, Airlock will be right up your alley.

As the on-screen character reaches the final level and steps into the elevator, the scene switches to the submarine once again, only this time the key character is seen jumping for joy atop the sub's top hatch, while triumphant music blares in the background.

CLIMBING WITH COMPUTERS

Apple Panic, from the dis-

tinguished software publishers, Broderbund, is the computer version of Universal's "ground-breaking" contop, Space Panic.

As it happens, the aliens who pursue — and are, in turn, hunted by—the game's shovel-wielding hero, bear a singular resemblance to — you guessed it — apples! It was therefore a relatively simple matter to redraw the aliens as ripe, red pieces of computer fruit.

Other than this minor change in graphics, the computer software version is faithful to its source of inspiration.

The action is quick and exacting and this title, which has been around for over a year, continues to do a good business. Like its role model, Apple Panic has become a genuine cult favorite among computer gamers.

The ladders, the aliens, the holes — all the familiar elements are here.

Previously available only for the Apple II, the game was just recently translated by

APPLE PANIC

Broderbund will soon be available for play on the Atari.

THE RISE AND FALL OF PICK AXE PETE

One of the earliest home programmable videogames to take advantage of the climbing craze is Odyssey's **Pick Axe Pete**. A grizzled old prospector must make his way to the top of the mineshaft playfield through a series of segmented corridors.

The rub here is that the ladders on each level periodically appear and disappear. Another now-you-see-it, now-you-don't item is Pete's trusty pick axe, which turns up randomly and may be used to chop boulders for bonus points. Without the axe, however, Pete must either leap-frog or dodge the oncoming rocks. Occasionally, these boulders have veins of pure gold running through them.

The ultimate object of the game is to scale the mine shafts and reach the top of the screen in time to snatch yet another periodically-appear-

ing item — the magic key that enables Pete to descend to the next level, which contains further riches and greater dangers.

Pick Axe Pete is an off-beat videogame with spare-but-effective graphics and a play mechanic that, once mastered, can prove tremendously addictive.

THE GORILLA OF YOUR DREAMS

With the explosion of **Donkey Kong** — which faced no difficulties with the use of the name "Kong" because of its Japanese language derivations — it was only natural

PICK AXE PETE

that someone would license the use of the even more celebrated "Kong".

When Carl Denham and his hardy crew set off to find "the biggest thing New York has ever seen" he certainly did not expect to encounter a humongous, 50-foot tall gorilla living behind a massive wooden wall constructed by the island natives. He didn't count on the simian taking a shine to his leading lady, either, and we're sure he never realized his prize would one day take the videogame world by storm.

Still, showman that he was, Denham

would probably have loved the idea — provided he got a piece of the action!

The company that finally picked up those rights was Tigervision, which made it the first cartridge release under its brand name.

King Kong, to be gentle about it, is not exactly all it could be. It presents a crude imitation of **Donkey Kong**'s first scenario and replaces the barrels and flame creatures with what look like old-fashioned toilets, some of which have lit fuses. There is only one playfield, but Tigervision's future output looks more than promising enough to make up for this failure.

RISE TO THE TOP

With Coin-Op Climbing Games

MAKE MINE MARIO!

Take a brave little carpenter named Mario, mix well with the beams-and-girders of a building under construction, and add a beautiful girl. And to this com-op confection toss in the star attraction — a gargantuan gorilla who has captured said beautiful girl.

Admittedly, these were climbing games that preceded Donkey Kong from Nintendo, but none offered the superior graphics, the recognizable characters, and the inspired "jump" element. All past videogames had

or more or less two standard responses to an oncoming threatening object: blow it up

or run away from it. By allowing players to vault their surrogates over such obstacles as barrels and flame creatures, and giving the bonus points for doing so, Donkey Kong opened up whole new vistas for arcaders. The well-timed jump has become as important a play skill as the ability to move smoothly through a maze or scroll cleanly through a rocky labyrinth.

The coin-op original uses a full 48K of memory, with loads of screen-RAM (the Random Access Memory that determines how many individual objects can be simultaneously animated on the screen). In fact, as full-blooded as the home version for the ColecoVision is, the coin-op is even more chock-full of dazzling, eye-popping animation and graphic effects.

Some of the chicer bits that Coleco couldn't bring to its 22K home version include the introductory sequence in which the gigantic simian carries Mario's fair lady up a ladder to the top of the initial playfield. We also saw the flaming oil barrels menacing our hero in addition to the normal rolling containers.

In the Nintendo Donkey Kong, Mario starts out standing beside an oil container, flames leaping skyward in red and yellow flickers. Periodically, barrels roll into this flaming solution and burst into real blazers, hurtling fearsomely toward the ever-intrepid carpenter.

Aside from the other innovations introduced by this

coin-op smasheroo, there's the good ol' bonus-barrel-basher! Each playfield offers at least one, and sometimes more, "hanging hammers". These mallets are suspended in the air at various points on the playfield.

The key to high scoring in Donkey Kong is summed up in the musical question, "How high can you get?", asked before each play on the coin-op. As the clock ticks down, potential points go up in smoke as Mario struggles valiantly to reach the ape's perch. The score garnered in each scenario is composed of bonus points from jumping and whacking out barrels and the points still left on the digit counter. Nonetheless, the desire to just shatter those annoying barrels is sometimes overwhelming. Beware — if the mallet is up in the air when a barrel comes "barreling" down the girder, Mario is wiped out.

MEET THE CRAZIEST CLIMBER OF ALL

It is a very frequent phenomenon in the world of videogames that competing titles can prove synergistic to one another. That is, despite the fact that both are vying for a pivotal spot in your

pocket, their play mechanics are similar enough to each other to create simultaneous interest. Just as the games Defender, Scramble and Super Cobra created a mutually beneficial desire on the part of arcades for exciting shoot-outs, the nearly simultaneous release of Nichibutsu's Crazy Climber and Nintendo's Crazy Climber helped hype player curiosity and, ultimately, interest in these intriguing contests.

Crazy Climber entered the U.S. market slightly ahead of the big monkey game, but never rose to the heights its sister coin-op attained. The game mechanic involved the use of twin joysticks with which gamers manipulated a daring human fly up the face of a great skyscraper.

The climber faces a wide variety of perils on his journey up the facing. Periodically, huge birds fly by, leaving the

athletic on-screen representative covered in a rather unpleasant substance. There are also falling flower pots and a mysterious voice that, at the oddest moments, will let fly with a lusty "Go for it!"

For months, arcaders the nation over puzzled as to the exact significance of the message. Did it signal a moment of safety, during which the climber could scramble up the building without fear of flower pots or bird droppings? No, that wasn't it. Perhaps it's a ploy, reasoned other gamers, the signal to be extra careful. The ultimate story, however, is much more prosaic. That frenzied warning-encouragement is a totally random factor. It just turns up every once in a while and has no relationship to any of the other game play elements.

So much for one of the great game mysteries of our time.

Crazy Climber has yet to prove a tremendous success, largely owing to its baroque and somewhat impractical play mechanic. The climber is moved up, down and sideways with two joysticks. This proved extremely difficult to master for most players, and the machine has been plagued by joystick malfunctions. It's offbeat movement system has kept Crazy Climber out of the home videogame market thus far.

CLIMBING, SCIENCE FICTION STYLE

That venerable grandfather of climbing videogames is Universal's coin-op Space Panic. It was the first game to use the concept of scaling ladders. That wasn't the only innovation in this breakthrough program. Not only did Space Panic prophesy the advent of climbing contests, but of "digging" games as well!

Players of Space Panic move from level to level using the now-familiar ladders, but armed with a shovel! The on-screen character is pursued through the multi-level maze by a covey of apple-like space creatures. The object of the game is for the "digger" to create holes into which onrushing aliens can tumble. Once in the pit, the character

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must then cover it up with the freshly shoveled dirt before it can escape.

Today, as new types of videogames appear with astonishing regularity, it is interesting to trace their concepts back to their roots. It is fascinating to see a game which never really drew a tremendous amount of recognition in its own right inspire everything from Donkey Kong to Dig-Dug.

DK'S SON: IT CLIMBS IN THE FAMILY

Well, jeepers, guys, if King Kong could have a son, and Pac-Man can manage an entire family, what could be more natural than a scion for Donkey Kong? Nintendo has already got the coin-op in test arcades, and it should prove a very viable successor to his famous father.

Here's the idea: Donkey Kong has been captured, of last, through the relentless tenacity of Mario the carpenter. As the playfield action starts, we see the pitiful, chained figure of the mighty DK standing atop a slightly familiar collection of girders. This time, it's the big monkey's offspring whom the arcader manipulates. It's his task to reach the top and rescue his famous father from the ignominy of imprisonment.

As in the original, reaching the top only insures yet another, more challenging, playfield to conquer — and more and more.

Young DK has a big job ahead of him, but if anyone can break his big daddy's shackles, that's the boy our money's on.

Now, where is Ms. Donkey Kong, eh??

AT THE HOP

And so the coin-op climbing contests continue to scale the arcade "Top Ten" list: that "climber" on the charts is from Atari's crack coin-op division and uses as its star a character about as perfectly suited to this format of game as anyone could devise.

Kangaroo is both the videogame's title and the species to which its protagonist belongs. Gamers control the high-jumping marsupial in a delightful contest that seems to have pushed all the right buttons on the nation's arcadegoers.

"The climbing game", we see, has now assumed the same level of prominence in the videogame universe as the scrolling shoot-out, the maze chase and the invasion game.

Just a casual glance at the field's big money-makers, in fact, confirms the suspicions: climbing contests are moving up, up and away! That's life on the fast escalator.

KANGAROO

TABLETOP

CLIMBING

COLECO'S DONKEY KONG

Coleco has single-handedly made **Donkey Kong** as popular in the home arcade field as it is in the amusement centers with its cartridges for ColecoVision, Intellivision and the Atari VCS. Now the same company has produced a tabletop edition of the premier climbing contest.

The *Donkey Kong* miniarcade could best be described as good, but not great. The same muteing technique that works so well for the other titles in this series comes up a might short when faced with the task of copying the outstanding animated visuals of the Nintendo coin-op.

On the other hand, the action in the game is very much what one would expect for the full-sized quarter-snatcher. Whether you like this game or not will most probably depend on whether play action or graphics counts most heavily with you.

BANDAI'S CRAZY CLIMBER

Unfortunately for fans of the coin-op, this tabletop version is a noble effort that simply falls short of the mark. It appears that the stand-alone technology available when it was developed was simply not sophisticated enough to handle the de-

CRAZY CLIMBER TABLETOP

DONKEY KONG TABLETOP

manding design.

Interestingly, this miniature edition suffers from the same problem that has plagued the full-size arcade machine: the joysticks do not give positive response with enough dependability to make the unit fun to play.

Entex, which recently pull itself on the map with its outstanding Super Cobra tabletop unit, is reportedly preparing to produce a version of *Crazy Climber*. Perhaps, with the advantage of a whole year's worth of improvements in electronic game design, it will be more successful at reproducing the action of the original.

The big problem with producing a home version of *Crazy Climber*, of course, is the difficulty designers have in recreating the two-joystick play mechanic. This eccentric control technique requires not only a pair of sticks but a pair of stationary joysticks, making stand-alones the perfect medium.

⑥

the 21st CENTURY ARCADE

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peds who steadily advances toward you. Single hoards shoot out from the sides! Spiders, earwigs and beetles appear to wriggle their own special havoc! Suddenly the screen is filled with waves of bombing bees, dragonflies and mosquitos! Your only chance is to explode one of your DDT bombs!

Are you ready to battle the bugs? Remember: you risk the sting of defeat ... but to escape the challenge is unthinkable. Arm yourself. Ask for Millipede where you play coin video games.

Millipede. The Centipede magic multiplies.

A Time Trip to the Game Parlor of the Future

By RICH PEARL

The world of electronic gaming moves fast. The manufacturers regard any year that does not boast at least five major technological breakthroughs as a fallow twelve months. This time-lapse perspective makes foreseeing the future a particularly chancy business — predicting events weeks ahead can be perilous; crystalballing the hobby as it will exist in the next century is like walking, unarmed, into a dragon's lair. You might sneak out with the treasure, after all, but chances are you'll be incinerated.

Keeping all this firmly in mind, the fact is that the calendar on the wall reads "1982". We sit a little more than a year away from the day when George Orwell envisioned gigantic TV monitors in every home and on every street corner. Big Brother, he feared, would be watching us very closely.

Actually, Orwell's vision was somewhat clouded. What he thought were images of fascistic governmental overlords were, in fact, great big videogames! Those big-screen TV's arrived ahead of schedule, you see, so instead of using them to supress freedom, people decided to play games on them.

Still, even 1984 is a good distance from 2001. Yet in researching the future of electronic gaming, certain fascinating bits of information and conjecture kept turning up again and again. Sitting down to put the puzzle together, at least a small portion of the future became clear. The smoke in the crystal ball began to dissipate, and here's what we saw:

Obviously, computers will play a major role in the arcader's future. Some of them will be so specialized that they will realistically draw the player right into the contest. The computers will provide total sensory output: audio, visual, olfactory (smell), and tactile (touch). Systems can already be manipulated by voice commands, and even some home videogames are chatting happily back at us as well. Interactive fiction should continue to do well, as will role-playing games that involve the arcader in ever more personal ways (such as *Prisoner* and *Network*). Players will be able to assume the role of a detective, questioning the suspects in a murder case with full audio/visual accompaniment.

Graphics are the fastest growing area of game design. In less than a decade, technology has jumped from *Pong* to *Zaxxon*, with Atari and other coin-op companies reportedly already testing three-dimensional games in Europe.

Look for arcades to be constructed along the lines of big-budget science fiction movie sets, with special effects a major attraction of the games. For example, there might be chairs that rock back and forth, swing from side to side or swivel a full 360°.

"Gaming and interacting with machines is an appetite the public has only recently discovered," points out Tom Lopez of Activision. "With our fast-progressing technology, one constantly updating and improving upon itself, the boundaries that confine most games will become limitless. The computer will soon become a daily tool used by everyone. As microprocessors and transistors become more refined and are, in turn, mass-produced, prices will drop. Computers continue to offer more capacity for less money. It will be cheaper — and more stimulating — to play computer games than to pay to be entertained at clubs or concerts, or in sacred sports arenas."

Since arcade games have the distinction of being designed for the purpose of executing one, specific program, they should be able to maintain an edge over home computers. The pay-for-play devices also utilize special monitors, that incorporate groundbreaking scanning technology, while home games remain chained to the family TV set.

The arcade games of the next century may not only be activated by voice command, but conceivably even by *thought* — at least in a sense. Something akin to galvanic skin-moni-

toring devices attached to the gamer's arm, perhaps in the form of a bracelet, could measure emotional response and even act as a triggering device.

In terms of futuristic audio, tomorrow's coin-ops — that is, if there still are such prehistoric items as coins still in use — will have miniature synthesizers to produce more highly defined sounds. There might even be devices to release pertinent smells at appropriate moments — the smell of gunfire for example. Such a machine could even blast the gamer with sound via headphones. Think about that for a second. Can you imagine the ambiance of a *silent arcade*? Now *that* would take some getting-used-to.

Visually, an expanded screen could project pictures all around the player. Special effects would be attained, with shutter lenses that use a liquid crystal diffusion process, in which a cathode ray delivers one picture after another in synchronized fashion, so fast and so frequently that it generates a convincing illusion of movement.

Picture this scenario: You are absorbed in a game of the future, seated within a totally enclosed environment. Images of shattering explosions, comets and asteroids whirl by as your seat shudders from the concussion. An asteroid passes so close you could almost etch your initials on its craggy surface. Over your headphones, meanwhile, your squad leader is passing on commands from headquarters. You have only split seconds to react, the results of an intergalactic battle hangs in the balance.

"When the games become transparent to the viewer, it will be so realistic, you'll feel you were there. Then the form of the game itself will disappear — as if it melted — and you will forget you're playing a game," predicts Lopez.

"We're rapidly reaching the point," concedes one computer expert, "where the technology is outstripping our ability to use it." The ability of the computers man has contructed began to awe us with their blinding growth. The ultimate solution to this problem may be the development of teamdesigning as a way of life in the arcade industry of tomorrow.

In the early days of videogames, a

single individual created each program

from conception to execution — everything but painting the title on the cabinet in some cases. As the sophistication of the industry grows, companies like Midway are setting up design teams, composed of people who specialize in each area of game invention. Some 16 creative artists and programmers combined talents to produce the marvelous *Tron* coin-op, with graphic concepts, audio effects and cabinet design handled by separate individuals under the supervision of a single manager.

George Gomez, head of the Midway in-house research and development group agrees that teamwork is the key to future game design. "It's too hard to find any one, or any two or three people with sufficient expertise in all the areas necessary to create a modern arcade game. We feel that areas such as cabinet and joystick design are vital elements in a game's success or failure."

Whether or not we'll see these innovations in the next century, the next decade or, perhaps, never, depends on the direction in which this wildly unpredictable business moves in the time ahead. But one thing does seem certain — electronic gaming will never die.

"People need sensory interface," as Tom Lopez puts it, "and electronic gaming gives that to people. More to the point, it's fun! Gaming is entertainment and it's here to stay!"

Even in the year 2001.

ATARI VIDEO SYSTEM X

FOOTBALL

Cartridges for the Atari 5200 (not compatible with the 2600) are placed in the top-loading slot seen here

Game functions on the 5200 are controlled by the hybrid keypad/joystick designed by Atari exclusively for the system

Computing functions in the 5200 are assigned solely to the keypad portion of the system's hand-controllers

THE ATARI

Atari's entry into the third-wave programmable sweepstakes — the sleek-looking new 5200

Is This the Videogame of the 1980's?

by ARNIE KATZ

Atari has produced a new, state-of-the-art videogame system. That's a concept worth pondering — and relishing — for awhile. The VCS is far and away the most popular programmable videogame of all time. Now, the same manufacturer has unveiled the 5200, which it hopes will be the VCS' eventual successor.

Although time and technology are catching up to the VCS, replacing it as America's favorite fun machine won't be easy. The VCS is a simple-to-use, reliable and flexible system, and it's likely to prove to be one mighty tough act to follow.

The sleekly-styled Atari 5200 certainly looks every inch the heir apparent to the VCS throne. The console's housing is strictly space-age, strongly resembling the cabinet which Atari intended to use on the never-to-be-released Remote Control VCS. It's an admirably compact device that should hold together well under the strain of normal wear.

Since most of the game-functions traditionally handled by the console have been transferred to the hand controllers, little gingerbread mars the surface of the main unit. An on/off switch, located on the lower right side, is the only important control, apart from the inevitable channel selector switch (to pick the place on the dial which the player will use to see the playfield) on the back panel. An LED "power on" light greatly minimizes the chance that a gamer will inadvertently leave the 5200 activated and idling all night long.

THE ATARI 5200 SYSTEM

5200 SYSTEM

After the company's near disaster of the UK (a computer system That's a network worth something — nearly unlimited — the past of the company the 5200 also for... to and area the most superior programmable videogame of all time. Now, for some reason that heralded the 5200 which turned out to be the VCS. Instead, success!

Although time and technology are catching up to the VCS, including it as America's favorite low-machine unit's lead, for $300 it is possible to use modules and master system, and the 5200 is second to be one worthy touch to follow.

The Atari's entry, the 5200 unit comes bundled with the best in game and is easily as good as anything flowing in single-circuit rich directly resembling the cabinet which you shouldn't scale — with the need for the superior control method of the game. Cartridge compact device that could have a controls as intended, for the best of normal wear. Since most of the game is better than the VCS, the console has died to the console have been handled to the rest playmate. The playerhead now the surface of the most unit up and possible as the brain right into the very expand control of the very in digit-made for how on light gear the are on plus light gear by the 5200 but with all there.

THE ATARI 5200 SYSTEM

Atari's whiz kids created the 5200 programmable videogame — the most advanced ever. Cost: $299

Cartridges for the Atari 5200 System are not compatible with those from the preceding VCS 2600 game system.

Upper functions on the Atari are operated by this little hand-held controller.

Trak-Ball-like unit is the 5200 controller, designed to land on the heaviest action of the game.

FOOTBALL

SPACE INVADERS

GALAXIAN

THE ATARI 5200 SYSTEM

Compatibility with existing hardware and software must have been the furthest thing from the designers' minds when they put together the 5200. Nothing you currently own will work in conjunction with the 5200, not even the TV antenna switch box that's stuck to the side of your family's television set like a limpet mine. Arcaders will be especially unhappy to learn that their collections of gourmet controllers, which work with the VCS, 400/800 and Commodore VIC-20, can't be plugged into the 5200.

In fairness, Atari officials offer a fairly reasonable explanation for this policy. They feel that it would be foolish to limit advanced videogame systems by forcing such devices to also be compatible with the more primitive, low-powered videogames already on the market. By biting the bullet now, Atari claims, all electronic gamers will benefit in the long run from the introduction of more sophisticated gear.

It's somewhat more difficult to understand why the company didn't make the 5200's game cartridges compatible with the ROM cards already produced for the 400 and 800 computers and/or the VCS. Atari has announced plans to improve this state of affairs by producing an add-on emulator that will allow the 5200 to play cartridges originally designed for the VCS. It will be available during the second half of this year.

The controllers are a noble attempt to improve the responsiveness of home videogame command devices.

They look and work like the typical controllers with one major difference: The harder the player pushes the stick in the desired direction, the faster the on-screen object moves. It gives the stick some of the characteristics previously found only on trackball controllers.

It's a brave experiment, but not an entirely successful one. It could well become the only type of joystick for the serious player once Atari or some other manufacturer get all the little bugs squashed, but it's not as good as a convention command device at the present time.

The Atari 5200 controller has three main components apart from the aforementioned joystick. A numerical keypad works with overlays provided with each cartridge to control various game functions, much in the manner of the Intellivision, Arcadia 2001 and ColecoVision. Two action buttons are mounted on each edge of the controller. The bottom buttons govern firing in all games, while the significance

SUPER BREAKOUT

of the other pair changes from cartridge to cartridge.

A row of three buttons is found on the front of the controller, just above the joystick. They are, from left to right: start - to initiate play; pause - to freeze the on-screen action when the phone rings or you want a mid-game snack; and reset - to begin the game anew.

By now you've probably noticed that nothing in this description sounds even remotely like a paddle. There is none, either provided with the machine or announced for separate distribution. Since the cartridge that is packaged with the system, Super Breakout, works best with a paddle, this lack is immediately obvious as soon as the system is uncrated. Worse yet, the new fangled joystick makes a poorer substitute for a paddle than the old-style type. It is hard to get the on-screen bat all the way over to the left and right playfield borders to hit the moving cursor, when it hugs the boundary line. If Atari doesn't intend to produce a paddle, it would be a kindness to electronic gamers to refrain from creating games that require such a command device.

The 5200's real excitement comes when you peel back the outer shell to reveal the digital brute beneath. The system boasts 64K bytes of memory, and that's more than most of today's microcomputers! You can't create your own programs with this machine, but it should be able to hold its own against much more expensively priced

48 Electronic Games

THE ATARI 5200 SYSTEM

personal computers when the job is to present commercially prepared software. This machine's stated goal is to bring coin-op quality electronic contests into the home, and the 5200 sure has the horses to live up to this claim. It may well turn out that the price of computer chips will have to fall even further before the 5200 can truly come into its own. It is not economically viable to make 64K RAM cards that sell for a competitive, under $40, price. The way the cost of raw materials is tumbling, however, you probably won't have to wait very long for this happy day.

But that's tomorrow. Whether you love or hate the current Atari 5200 cartridge library will largely depend on your own situation. Those who have thus far refrained from buying a home fun machine are likely to break out the champagne. Those who already own a system, especially a VCS or 400/800, are more likely to break out the Saturday Night Special or throw darts at a map of Sunnyvale, CA. The reason: With the exception of Galaxian, all titles in the first group of releases are copied from either the computer or VCS catalogs with only the slightest changes.

Taking the cartridges one at a time:

Super Breakout. While this is certainly one of the best games ever packaged with a videogame system, it isn't exactly fresh and new. After all, there are Super Breakout cartridges for

ATARI 5200 FOOTBALL

both the VCS and 400/800 computers already. This one adds nothing significant to the design, and it is very rough to play without a paddle controller.

Space Invaders. The 5200 version is a virtual duplicate of the cassette SI Atari published for the 400/800 when they first reached market. In a way, it's too bad that the designer didn't draw on the VCS Space Invaders for inspiration, instead, since it looks and plays more like the Taito/Midway coin-op classic.

Star Raiders. Atari's advertising now seems to equate Star Raiders with arcade-spawned biggies like Asteroids and Pac-Man, and there's a lot of truth in this claim. Star Raiders is certainly the hands-down choice of EG readers as the favorite computer software program, and there's no reason to suppose that the 5200 edition, which is cut from the same cloth, will fare any worse. This is also the only cartridge to date that really makes extensive use of

controller overlays.

Missile Command. The response is even faster in this version than it was in the 400/800 cartridge Atari marketed 18 months ago. There are a few other minor alterations, but nothing else especially noteworthy. This is a superb home version of one of the most exciting and distinctive electronic games.

Galaxian. This is the newcomer to the Atari line-up, never having been offered previously for any Atari system. Although it's the officially licensed home edition of Galaxian, it somehow ends up being a bit tame compared to the Midway pay-for-play device. The animation just doesn't flow as smoothly, robbing Galaxian of much of its grace. The winged aliens look pretty good, but they don't swoop with the same abandon as in the coin-op.

Two other cartridges, previewed but not yet thoroughly tested by EG, are penciled in for early release by Atari, Centipede and Defender. The former is also available for the 400/800 computer in cartridge form, but the 5200 edition is at least as good or even better.

Will Atari duplicate its VCS success with the 5200 and make it the programmable videogame system of the mid-1980's? The only possible answer is that the jury is still deliberating the question, and it's likely to stay out for at least the next year. ⊖

MISSILE COMMAND

STAR RAIDERS

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COMPUTER

PREPPIE!
Adventure Int./Atari 400&800/32K disk

If long-time computer gamers were asked to play Preppie! and identify the company that produced it, probably the *last* software-maker it would be ascribed to would be Adventure International. The Florida-based company founded by the first father of text adventures, Scott Adams, has exactly built their reputation around either arcade contests or high-resolution graphics.

The day of text-adventure dominance, however, has gone the way of the covered wagon—or, more accurately, radio drama. Today's computer adventures are full-blown visual epics, with arcade-style action elements frequently built into the program. Adventure International therefore decided to strike out in new directions, offering high-speed action contests such as Rear Guard and, now, the

Frogger-inspired delight, Preppie!

As with the original, this is a game wherein gamers must maneuver an on-screen character across, first, a roadway and then a body of water. The object here, however, is retrieval rather than goal-oriented. Moreover, the amphibian has metamorphosed into a graphically-realistic preppie, complete with alligator shirt and saddle shoes! This suave little chap must first make his way over a golfing green literally crawling with everything from golf carts and lawnmowers to slick roadsters, to the horizontal mid-lane, where a golf ball turns up randomly and must be picked up and returned to the base of the playfield.

Later novices introduce more golf balls, and many of them turn up at the top of the screen, meaning our collegiate friend must also navigate a strongly-flowing river, leaping from canoes to logs and even onto the backs

of alligators. The jump must be carefully timed, though, since landing on the edges of either logs or boats causes them to tip over.

Sure it sounds familiar, but what elevates Preppie! from the score of Frogger-clones on the software market is the enchanting four-part harmony sound effects and musical accompaniment and the stunning graphics. True, the background rendition of "I Was Walking Through the Park One Day (In the merry, merry month of May)" can grate on the nerves with the umpteenth replaying, but it is pretty. And what graphics! Everything from our preppie protagonist to the tractors

in lavish colors and with marvelous definition by designer Russ Wetmore. The logs

Don Your Alligator Shirt, Running Shoes, It's Time to Play Preppie!

PREPPIE!

seem so real you almost feel as if you could touch them.

Preppie! does not want for special features, either, the cute, little touches that can make all the difference. When our hero is crushed by one of the vehicles roaming the highway sector of the playfield, we see him realistically pancaked, flattened into a wall poster. Tipping over a canoe, or falling off a log into the lake, however, is presented with a nice splash effect.

Problem: the roadway half of *Preppie!* seems much too easy while the watery portion appears more difficult than it ought to. In reality, neither portion of this videogame challenge is disproportionately facile or unreasonably problematic. It's just that the two segments are so out of whack with one another that they create this impression. The walking segment's a real mile run in the early racks, while the jumping action on the waterway is a challenge even on the initial playfield. The trick is to land squarely in the center of any floating objects, especially the canoes which do so love to tip over when our prep school protagonist takes the front or back of the various-sized watercraft. *Preppie!* signals the dawn of a new

age at Adventure International, one where audio and graphics are as vital as game play and concept. Rarely is the debut software from even a veteran producer this finely crafted, however, I mean, *really*. . .

(Bill Kunkel)

CHOPLIFTER
Broderbund/Apple II/48K disk

The Bungeling Empire needs to be taught a lesson. It has captured a bunch of your citizens and is confining them to wooden barracks. Needless to say, your people want to go home. *Choplifter* provides the player with a

Don Your Alligator Shirt, Running Shoes, It's Time to Play Preppie!

PREPPIE!

Adventure International/Star Craft

It took me several years to get around to playing Preppie! and considering the company that produced it, perhaps I was not the fanatic I had been expected to be about Adventure International. The friends-based company I learned to love from the first software offered was Scott Adams — whose first adventure, Adventureland, sold for a buck or two. The graphic adventures that followed were at least of high resolution graphics.

The day of text-adventure Adams fans seems long gone the way of the buggy whip and I was satisfied with the cassette versions. Several versions are now being published. I tried them on my Atari. Still, the appeal of Preppie! was strong and eventually I ran the program.

The premise of Preppie! is simple. Frogger adapted slightly, Preppie!

As with the original, this is a game wherein screen-level maneuvering sets an on-screen character across first a roadway and then a body of water. The player's here, however, is Wadsworth Overcash Esq., rather than green-suited amphibians, the amphibious, too incompetent of the frog. And it's a gestalt, he must cross a golf course.

The challenge, too, consists of the player darting across a golf course complete with chiggins club and sand traps. The boss-level chip must be rescued and finally, the golf balls rescued from the darting, finally causing with everything men golf cells and lawnmowers to dart through any point along the course.

Later one or demures more golf balls, and somehow so the golf cells and lawnmowers wheel a golf ball have an oddly more graphic means and as as each tour of movement or its all dangers. The jump must be seen fully tread, though, once again the alligator must avoid the motorboats that zip to and fro on the water.

In both colors and with obvious graphic, the golf club's color is on-screen boundary for golf course, which leads from their boathouse level.

Though the golf ball must be carried over every course safely, it is a difficult one. Diggers clones on the course marker is the motorboats level and harshly across the water's movement, as it moves across the over of the stunning yourself. Even the background motions of this line set you a moment, or an out-boat approaches and the rumbling chip out of the golf balls from their very dangers.

Once the chip is deposited, once or twice or so the player must dart across the golf course and the water once again...

Later on one also must take it at a very careful effort. The putt green has their own holes under a sand which need more than there is to see. Sure, it sounds familiar, but what makes Preppie! worth the amount of happy chimes on the relevant and re-done aspects of the lawnmower that each harshly inevitable part and then, the background mechanic as a nice-sound, harshly thumping, the best-judgment in the swimming yourself, that the lawnmower over and the stunning yours on the best sound over on the putt the green. The putt green has their own holes under a sand which need more than there is to see. The program does the stunning...

Logg onto the bike; however, a preppie switch each card with the lovers' switch and your game it's along and harshly yourself that a line of each chip may go putt the green cells. It's along each harshly golf swing along the motorboats, which delights, harshly each whirl-boat judgment to the best over the once went the best over when onel year, onel, harshly judgment as the lawnmower over the best sound. The lawnmower, harshly onel, best. Preppie! onel, onel, lawnmower over, onel, onel, over, lawnmower.

age of Adventure International one whole suite of graphics set as well as several titles which I've enjoyed. In the Star software from even a veteran producer like Broderbund, however it still is.

(Bill Kunkel)

CHOPLIFTER

Broderbund Apple II disk size

The forgoing Delphi I wrote for lie is known. It has captured a bit of attention. The game is wonderful, their lure incredible. Nevertheless most finally was a game all Macy-of a wonderful, it's...

CHOPLIFTER

fleet of three whirlybirds, available one at a time, with which to rescue the hostages and fly them to a safe haven on your side of the border.

The arcader uses the joystick to guide the machine gun-armed craft into enemy territory, where it can pick up hostages and convey them to the post office landing site. Whenever the helicopter touches down within enemy territory, every hostage who isn't locked inside one of the buildings sprints toward the ship. You can ferry a maximum of 16 people on each trip. When one load disembarks at the post office, you must take to the sky again and perform another hazardous mission into Empire territory.

The Bungelings have three types of weapons to thwart your mission of mercy. Of immediate concern are the Bungeling tanks which regularly patrol the barracks area. If there's no tank around when you land to pick up some hostages, you can count on at least one rumbling into view within just a few seconds. The only course of action possible at that point is to take to the air and try to pound the armored fighting vehicle in question into the surrounding terrain.

It isn't too long before the jet fighters flash into view. They zoom across the sky, firing air-to-air missiles at the helicopter. Finally, the Bungelings have drone air mines which home in on the helicopter even if it is on its own side of the border. This is probably the most potent weapon in the Bungeling arsenal, and it requires the arcader to keep the helicopter in more or less constant motion. The 'bird is most vulnerable on the ground, so learning to keep touch-downs as brief as possible is a key to success.

Designer Dan Gorlin has done a particularly outstanding job in creating the graphics for Choplifter. No game does better at simulating what it might be like to control a helicopter. One of the action buttons fires the craft's machine gun, while the other is used to alter the direction of flight. A good hard push of the button reverses the helicopter's altitude on the screen 180 degrees, while a brief push turns the flying machine so that it faces the garner. This is the "tank attack position", the only way you can smash those pesky defenders.

The extra touches are plentiful, too. The sequence in which a damaged helicopter crashes and burns is beautifully done, with yellow and orange flames gradually consuming the downed chopper.

A clever method of on-screen scoring keeps the player constantly appraised of how the overall mission is going. The figure next to the red lemon located at the top-left of the screen shows the number of hostages killed, the blue lemon to its right indicates the number of hostages actually on the helicopter, and the green lemon on the far right tallies the number of saved hostages. The game continues until the player has either lost all three choppers or all the hostages are killed or freed.

Choplifter is totally unlike any other scrolling shoot-out you may play this year. The movement characteristics of the helicopter — something like a cork bobbing on a choppy sea — force the player to confront each aspect of the rescue mission as an end in itself. You can't simply bull your way through this one, guns chattering death in every direction.

Choplifter has everything the truly great computer game program needs. It has fine graphics, subtle play action and lots of close calls for the player. Give Broderbund a gold star.

(Arnie Katz)

PAC-MAN
Atari/Atari 400 & 800/ROM Cartridge

Groans of anguish, at least from some quarters, greeted the debut of the Atari VCS edition of Pac-Man. It seemed to be just a shadowy, flickering echo of the Taito/Midway blockbuster that has made the whole country goofy about gobble games.

The computer version of the world's most popular maze-chase is bound to get a warmer reception from rank and file gamers than the videogame cartridge which preceded it to market. Not only is the play-action good, highlighted by a reasonable responsiveness to manipulation of the joystick, but the

PAC-MAN

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on-screen layout is much more similar to the pay-for-play machine. The elements that made the coin-op a classic are present in this 400/800 ROM cartridge, including multiple levels of difficulty, a variety of bonus prizes that rise in value as play continues, and differentiation among the four goblins who chase Pac-Man through the maze.

The publisher has responded to the challenge of producing a set of useful instructions for this widely known game. The full-color, glossy rules booklet which accompanies the cartridge is definitely one of the most attractive ever produced for a home game, and it has a lot of good bits of advice for Pac-Maniacs. The eight-page folder might not be the best approach for a totally unfamiliar title, but it works perfectly for this game.

Of particular help in formulating strategy is the page headed "Pac-Man Experts' Corner". Here, in chart form, is everything the thinking arcader needs to know about the various playfields that comprise the program for this chase-and-be-chased contest. Shown is a picture of the bonus nugget which appears on each playfield, the value of the nugget in question, speed ratings for Pac-Man, Blinky (the fastest) and the rest of the goblins, the amount of time the goblins stay blue after Pac-Man chomps one of each maze's four power pills, and the number of blinks a blue goblin makes before turning its normal color. A player armed with such data stands a much better chance of using his or her three Pac-lives more intelligently than arcaders who blunder blindly around the labyrinth.

The 400/800 Pac-Man still lacks a few of the frills of the original, but the essence of the gobble game comes through in fine shape. (Arne Katz)

SOCCER

Gamma/Atari 400 & 800/16K tape or disk

Gamma's second entry into the otherwise empty computer sports simulations market, while not a total rave-up, at least shows considerable improvement over their debut program (the inept Hockey). Problems seem to result from novice programmers and a minimum of memory (16K) — which, at least, makes it accessible to all Atari computer owners. Sports games, however, especially those played on large fields, such as football and soccer, demand "scrolling", the movement of the screen in a rolling fashion that allows the gamers much greater flexibility in movement, passing and shot selection.

To its credit, Gamma is begun to be played by anywhere from two to four players, and the action flows much more smoothly than in their hockey simulation. There is also full access to all areas of the field — no on-screen "dead spots" such as behind the net in Hockey where the puck, but not the players, can travel.

More to the point, however, there simply isn't a lot of choice in this particular area of gaming. Computer sports simulations for the Atari computers are virtually non-existent. Despite its dubious reputation, the VCS has an entire library of excellent compatible sports cartridges, from their own **Pele' Soccer** (which scrolls vertically) to the Activision-produced ice **Hockey** and **Tennis** that makes the selection of computer available products seem as anemic as it is. Only when there is a greater selection of available sports programs will evaluation be truly equitable. In the here and now, Soccer is *probably* the best existing team sport simulation available for the Atari systems and, again, by limiting the program to 16K. Gamma has made it available to all Atari owners instead of those 400 owners with memory-expansion boards only.

In other words, it may not be perfect, but it's the only game in town.

(Bill Kunkel)

ABUSE

Don't Ask Software/Apple II
Atari 400&800/48K disk

Some of the early computer teaching and quiz programs tend to personalize the machine by having it make extra little comments depending on whether the human operator had just given the right or wrong response.

It was quite common for a computerist to be told "You're wrong, you turkey," or the equivalent by his machine.

Saner heads have prevailed in recent years. The current emphasis on user-friendliness is also reflected in the fact that few programmers will put such insults into their creations for fear of needlessly embarrassing — and thus turning off — the user.

But if you're one of the few who miss this rather sophomoric aspect of early home computing — or you just enjoy exchanging slurs — **Abuse** is right up your alley, you shallow nerd. Oops, guess this program is even getting to me!

The format is simplicity itself. The computer prints an insult on the screen and prompts you to type in a reply on the keyboard. Based on certain key words in your insult, the computer churns out a hopefully appropriate snide remark. There's even a semi-competitive version in which the human player gets points for hurling jibes that hit the program's key words.

In the absence of graphics or other complications, this program must be judged as having only limited appeal to a special audience of crypto-masochists. It's well done enough — though the computer's habit of throwing phrases together somewhat randomly causes it to speak gibberish from time to time — but it is unlikely to hold the typical computerist's attention for more than a few minutes.

(Steve Davidson)

FIREBUG

MUSE/Apple II/48K Disk

The success of **Pac-Man** has lit a fire under programmers everywhere to put together more challenging and original maze chases. Silas Warner is the first to fan the flames by forcing the gamer to turn a five-story building into a raging inferno to get the most out of this outing.

Each floor is a maze of walls and gas cans. The gamer can pick up the cans and then drop them where he wishes to start the fire, or he may merely run over them and begin the blaze in that manner.

There is a fuse that starts a set distance behind the can dropping menace and it is the length of that fuse that sets the difficulty of the challenge. The fuse moves faster than the firebug and it burns everything it touches. When the gamer drops his last can, he must avoid the fire and leave the floor

Sirius™ All Star Games

SUPER FUN!

By Bill Kunkel

SLITHER

GO!

Anybody out there interested in a game with eye-pleasing graphics, full-screen player-movement and more action than you can shake a snake at? Yes? Then definitely check out GDI's **Slither.**

Set against a desert background, this game is sort of a kissing cousin to both **Centipede** and **Robotron** with a trunkful of its own unique variations. Players manipulate a blaster weapon, via trac ball, over the entire playfield, moving and turning freely thanks to the fluid control system. On either side of the trac ball are the firing buttons (to accommodate either left or right-handed arcaders) that send vertical blasts either straight up or down-screen. Most players will not only soon find it superior to most other firing schemes.

The game begins with the playing of the title tune and the unveiling of the playfield, which consists of desert sands and the wild cactus growing there. The horizon line is visible at the top of the screen, crowned with a

Fight for Your Life Against the Sinister Serpents!

bright, vermillion sky. There is also an obstruction — a large rock — around which the gamer must maneuver in order to hit vertical targets on the other side.

The object of the game is to utilize this free-wheeling weapon against a wide variety of point-worthy — and frequently deadly — on-screen characters. Enemy number one are the snakes. Initially, a few paltry serpents turn up — easy pickings for even novice Blaster-Pilots — while the bonus timer winds down. Players receive the number of points remaining on the timer the instant they wipe out the last snake. Point values on the slithering sidewinders vary depending upon which part of their body is hit. The head portion is worth extra points, for example, while the body portions have lesser value. Each time a snake is wiped out, it metamorphoses into blades of grass, which can also be destroyed for points — and helps unclutter the playfield for clear shots.

Each time the bonus counter winds down, a new, differently-colored plethora of snakies turn up. The reptiles, converging on the players dual-direc-

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SLITHER
CONTROL PANEL

FIRE UP

FIRE UP

ONE PLAYER

FIRE DOWN

TRAC-BALL CONTROLLER

TWO PLAYR

FIRE DOWN

In **Slither,** players manipulate a free-rolling trackball around a desert-style landscape. This is the first game to use a cannon with total screen mobility — except for the random areas in which rocks turn up.

On either side of the trackball are a pair of diagonally situated button controls. The upper button controls the blaster's overhead firing while the lower trigger engages the downward-firing laser. The dual sets of buttons are

for the benefit of left-handed arcade enthusiasts.

Detailed instructions on game play are featured at the left of the console and one and two-player selector switches sit at the extreme right.

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tional cannon from all sides, are far from the only thing on the gamer's mind. Pterodactyls and winged-apes — in addition to the thick foliage — begin to choke the playfield

An interesting scoring touch — the closer the cannon is to the dozing creatures when they're hit, the greater their point value!

As the arcader reaches the higher levels, the usual assortment of extra challenges begins turning up. The mutant gorillas begin planting quick-grow grass seeds, messing up the

SLITHER COIN-OP

playfield in the process. Also, when a sky-soaring simian makes contact with a snake, the reptile is rendered invisible except for his glowing, lidless eyes creating all manner of havoc on the playfield.

Slither is a game that draws inspiration from other sources; refining it and conjuring up an entirely new brew. It may very well be reminiscent of other videogames, but Slither has a strong — and highly playable — personality of its own.

Tips for Berzerk-ers!

By FRANK TETRO JR.

BERZERK

Atari/2600 (VCS)

In Atari's home translation of the popular Stern coin-op, the gamer is the sole survivor of a small group of human beings who have just landed on the planet Mazeon. Your companions have all been slaughtered and you must flee through the planet's network of mazes, stalked by the world's inhabitants—killer robots called "Auto-Mazeons". You have a laser for protection, but the robots are similarly armed. Using the joystick controls, you may move in any of eight directions through the maze, but contact with either the robots or the walls of the labyrinth are deadly.

A random number of robots turn up in any given room, and it is not required that all the mechanoids be obliterated before departing a maze—though it is worth a 10-point bonus for every Auto-Mazeon destroyed, in addition to their normal 50-point value.

Your other enemy is Evil Otto, who appears only when playing at the high difficulty settings. This bouncing indestructible creature is not hindered by walls and will make a beeline for your on-screen surrogate if you dawdle too long in any room (in some game variations, Otto can be hindered by being hit with the laser gun).

Players begin the game with three lives and you may or may not earn bonus lives for every 1,000 points, depending upon the variation.

Once play begins, keep moving. At the first level, the robots do not fire back at you, though contact with them

incinerates any human. Beyond the first maze, the Auto-Mazeons shoot back. Keep in mind, however, that the robots won't fire during the gamer's first two seconds in the maze, so immediately blast anything nearby. Always move away from the door through which you entered the maze, as this is the direction from which Otto will invariably emerge.

Unlike the arcade version, in which it is preferable to use vertical and horizontal fire, diagonal shooting proves much more rewarding here. The robots, you see, can't fire diagonally. This strategy keeps you at a safe angle while enabling you to plug an Auto-Mazeon.

The robots are very sensitive to movement by the player's on-screen analog and will attempt to remain in line with it. Use this tendency to your advantage by moving up and down or side to side, causing the enemy to become confused and run into the wall — or each other.

Once Evil Otto makes his appearance, don't panic! Simply remain near an exit and keep firing at the robots. Otto moves fairly sluggishly while robots remain on-screen. Once they're eliminated, however, he's able to leap at you in enormous bounds.

At the higher levels, it becomes even more imperative that you do not remain in a horizontal line with a robot. The Auto-Mazeons simply shoot too fast for most players to elude the oncoming blast.

One final hint: Don't always be the aggressor. Once a room is entered, no matter how many robots occupy it, remain calm and hide behind a wall for a few seconds. Often the robots will blow up one another in their feverish attempts to finish you. Don't wait too long, or Evil Otto will see to it that you become a permanent resident of Mazeon.

VENTURE

Coleco/ColecoVision

In the home version of Exidy's pioneer adventure coin-op, players control "Winky" through the many levels of an underground dungeon, laden with fantastic treasures, but guarded by fierce creatures.

Winky begins life as a dot on a floor plan of level one. He may move in any of eight directions and enter one of the quartet of rooms through any of their doors. Be careful — the halls are patrolled by monsters! Once within a room, the perspective shifts to a close-

BERZERK

Always enter the Snake Room from the left side

The ever-dangerous moving walls and how to overcome them

up view of Winky, the treasure and the monsters hovering protectively near the prize. Winky must grab the treasure and escape the room alive. Though they have point values, determined by the level of play at which the gamer is working, killing the monsters is not required. In fact, their cadavers are as deadly to Winky as their live bodies and varying amounts of time must pass before the corpses disappear. Once Winky plunders a room of its treasure, it is filled in with coloration to indicate its having been eliminated.

After you've located all four rooms on the first floor, good old Winkeroo gets a bonus — dependant upon how quickly you've completed the level.

The castle itself consists of three different configurations, containing either four or five rooms on each level. Beyond the third floor, the initial trio of floor plans reappear at higher difficulty settings (e.g. the guardian monsters move more quickly, as do the wandering hall monsters who stalk the screen's perimeter and charge into rooms being searched by Winky when the title dude takes too long. There is no defense against a hall monster except to roll Winky on out of there as fast as possible.)

Each of Venture's rooms support a different strategy, and drawing approaches to all 12 would require most of this issue. Instead, we're opting for a look at the most challeng-

ing rooms on each of the three levels.

On the first floor, you must face the Goblin, Skeleton, Serpent and Moving Wall Rooms, each boasting its own distinctive creatures and theme song. The Goblin Room should be entered from the right door, but neither it nor the Skeleton chamber will pose a severe test.

The key to the Serpent Room is fairly simple — always enter from the left side. Strolling in through the opposite door leaves Winky surrounded by writhing reptiles with almost no time to get off even a single arrow.

The most challenging room on the first level is the Wall Room. Following the diagram elsewhere in this column, enter through the right side and move immediately into the right-hand lower corner. When the South wall has reached the bottom of the playfield, move diagonally to the center and capture the diamond. Now stand perfectly still until the walls retract again and retrace Winky's steps back down into the right-hand lower corner and exit as you entered, through the right side doorway.

On level two, you are taunted by the Spider, Dragon, Troll and Two-Headed Rooms. Entering the Spider sanctum from either side, you see a trio of red arachnids. Destroy at least two of them and grab the treasure. This causes the remaining spider(s) to disappear, to be replaced by a pair of faster yellow spiders, one guarding each exit. Try to wait for one of the yellow buggers to move up or down and then fire an arrow. Killing a spider in front of the exit will force Winky to wait for the body to disappear, greatly increasing the odds of a visit from a wandering monster

Venture from ColecoVision adapts the Exidy coin-op to the home format

The Dragon lair predominantly requires sharp reflexes. Upon entering, quickly fire to the left, for a dragon always turns up in that spot. After this first kill, the remaining dragons resume a random pattern. Kill them quickly. Offing two dragons will cause the remaining pair to retreat temporarily, allowing Winky to take the money and run.

At the Troll booth, Winky must move below a horizontal wall and wait for it to disappear before firing. The Trolls aren't all that tough — easy to hit or avoid — so your major goal is not to kill one in such a way that its corpse blocks your retreat.

The Two-Headed Room is a novelty in that no monsters appear until after Winky has secured the treasure. Then, two flying creatures appear in front of each exit. These denizens of this dungeon must be shot quickly. Wait for them to disappear, then split.

Level three poses the challenge of the Genie, Cyclops, Bat and Demon Rooms. The Genie's domain may be entered through either side. Genies are quick but not especially clever.

The greatest difficulty with the Bat Room is simply reaching it. The en-

trance is a thin corridor patroled by a veritable marching society of bat monsters. Using basketball-style tactics, attempt to take your way around the beastie closest to the entryway and slip inside. Fire instantly into the lower right-hand corner — a "gimmee", since a bat is always in that position — then deal with the remaining creatures as you like.

The Demon's lair is similar to the Two-Headed Room from the previous level. Upon entering, you will see nothing but the treasure. The demons only turn up after you enter the narrow passage to the booty. Instinct may make you want to head directly for the door, but by this time the demons will have blocked it with their bodies. Instead, take them on as soon as they appear and battle them in the open, where there's room to maneuver.

Beyond this level, gamers revisit a slightly amped-up version of level two and so on. Generally speaking, avoid entering and re-entering a room as this only speeds up the counter for the entrance of a hall monster, not to mention reviving any monsters you managed to kill in your first tour.

Happy venturing!

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PINBALL-PALACE

1982's Greatest Hits!

By ROGER C. SHARPE

Well, if nothing else, 1982 will go down as the year of Electronic Games — the magazine you're now reading as well as the machines which inspired its birth. However, even with all of the screen gems which have continued to increase, flipper games and variations on a theme, have managed to remain viable challenges to those who still want to try their hand at truly three-dimensional fun. In fact, over the past twelve months, manufacturers, although decreasing the number of games due to lack of demand, have brought to life some very exciting pinball machines which have managed to weather the passage of time and, like vintage wine, have improved with age without their inherent appeal diminishing.

Some might even be considered classics in their own right for the timelessness of their design and for programming which maximizes playfield features and the continuity of action from round to round. And with the beginning of a new year holding out the hope of even greater changes and innovations, it seems appropriate to resurrect a selection of games that are still drawing in players from coast to coast.

Their appearance on the scene offered the promise of just how diverse the world of pinball can be, at a time when one saw such aberrations as multi-level playfields, a flipper in the backglass (Stern's **Catacomb**), a contoured surface (Stern's **Orbitor 1**), the melding of pinball and video (Gottlieb's **Caveman**) and pinball that

wasn't *really* pinball (Williams' Hyperball and Bally's **Rapid Fire**).

But somehow, through all this, stellar performers do stand out for a variety of reasons. Even though their popularity might not have always justified a special place apart from the crowd. See if you don't agree as we wrap up a number of models which attained sometimes brief success and other times a more lasting legacy during the past year.

EIGHT BALL DELUXE

EIGHT BALL DELUXE
Bally

It hit in the spring of 1981 and has endured on the strength of a sound design and total programming package which brought pinball back to its basics in a day and age when many doubted the wisdom of its creation.

Borrowing on the name of its landmark predecessor (circa 1977), **Eight Ball Deluxe** offered simplicity of action, a theme it faithfully replicates, and the utilization of speech for those players needing some extra direction regarding what to aim for next. From the moment the machine bellows, "Stop talking and start chalking," pinballers know this is a different flipper experience. Yet the layout is fairly conventional.

Eight Ball Deluxe features two lanes (A & B) at the top, three thumper bumpers just below, a set up of four in-line drop targets (for bonus multiplier values up to 5X) just to the left and an alley way, farther over on the same side, for access back to the top. Move down a bit and there's a lone flipper for helping to get to the primary part of the game, because it's the right side that's loaded on *Eight Ball Deluxe*.

There's a top right drop target (B), which fronts a lock-out hole and the chance to collect points accrued during play. However, it's the seven bank of drop targets at midfield, which really hold the scoring potential for the machine and not so coincidentally, also tie in with a regular pool game with numbers 1 through 7 (solids) earned

via the drop targets and the rest of the rack possible via another set of stand up targets behind.

The balance of action is great from left to right and right to left, with hold over point totals increasing from ball to ball depending upon whether a rack can be completed—with the "eight ball" target being the last to accomplish this feat. So there's build up of action and continuity for players not usually found on the majority of recent machines which tends to make *Eight Ball Deluxe* the satisfying challenge it still is today—even for those who have never been behind the eight ball.

VIPER

Stern

Besides its striking graphics, Viper never really gained the recognition or acceptance it might have achieved at another time when videogames were not preeminent. Alas, that's the fate of this and many other models which rapidly come and then disappear.

It wasn't even that Viper deserved more of a fighting chance on the strength of the overall game play or design, but rather that some novel touches were abruptly passed over. On the whole, the layout of the board is very linear in its placement of features with two side lanes and a wider center lane at the top leading down to two thumper bumpers. At the right is a three-bank of drop targets. A long lane down the side leads to

a lower flipper, while the right offers another three-bank and a spinner lane for access back to the top.

That was basically it, except for some nooks and crannies, — and a massive center feature called a Roto-Shooter. This revolving gizmo provides the potential for a player to land a ball in it and then control the direction of the Shooter. It was a noble, if unsuccessful, experiment which just didn't spark the interest that was ongoingly anticipated But it was a clever attempt in its own right, nonetheless

As for the rest of the game, Viper incorporates much within the existing playfield components, such as bonus multiplier values up to 9X, a spinner with increased points depending upon what a player has already achieved and, lastly, multi-ball play. Taken in total, there would appear to have been enough for any flipper fanatic, but somehow Viper missed the target, although it's still worth the price of admission to sample yet another variation on the theme.

These are only some of the recent vintage pins you should be on the look out for when you next visit your favorite game room. Others are fast hitting the scene as the three remaining domestic manufacturers (Stern having dropped out of the flipper sweepstakes to concentrate on videogames and other areas of business) try to keep pinball rolling for those players who can still find enjoyment in its very special qualities and unique challenges. And just as long as there's a following, so too will there be new machines to test our skills and satisfy our game playing desires.

BLACK HOLE
Gottlieb

Although the company later followed it up with the first truly interactive three-level pinball design, Black Hole led the way for an industry which had built up, rather than down, in expanding the scope of what was possible under the playfield glass. Gottlieb's Black Hole changed all this forever, when it added a playfield underneath the main board and enhanced the total effect with a spinning "spiral" in the backglass as well as some dramatic lights and sounds.

There are three lanes on top and three thumper bumpers sided by a bank of five drop targets at the left (B-L-A-C-K) and four on the right (H-O-L-E), with an empty center — for reasons which will become ob-

BLACK HOLE (GOTTLIEB)

vious. The bottom features a bank of four stand up targets and a left side kick-out hole with a top flipper and also another thumper bumper, while the bottom offered a double set of flippers on the right and a lone one on the left.

But then there is the long winding shot, through a spinner, on the left that suddenly sends the ball to a netherworld of "inverted" play with the flippers "facing" toward the front of the game as viewed through a clear portion of the board. As if this innovation in design weren't enough, Black Hole also boasts multi-ball play, with a chance to lock up a ball down below, as well as above. It's a totally unique experience when achieved.

The game was an evolutionary breakthrough which didn't forsake play appeal in the process of incorporating its very noticeable departure from what was considered conventional design parameters. If a pinballer didn't make it to the lower playfield, there was still more than enough on top to keep the challenge going and the score mounting.

CENTAUR
Bally

Another model from the wonderful folks at Bally, best known for Pac-Man and its various offshoots, is Centaur, unveiled in late 1981 and distributed in full force by the beginning of the next year. Considered by many to be the consummate pinball machine, this vision of black and white with its color-coded enhancements of red, yellow,

CENTAUR

Q&A

By THE GAME DOCTOR

Several matters to clean up before I can get down to the business — postponing appointments and short-shifting patients. First, when we mentioned in a previous column that the games designed by Mattel for the Intellivoice module were non-compatible with the other cartridges in the line, we did not mean to imply that the regular games would not play through the Intellivoice. It is not necessary to remove the voice module, therefore, to plug in your old favorites.

Secondly, I wanted to thank readers such as Raymond Ulibarri of Billings, MT and Brent Davenport of Baton Rouge who sent arcade tokens upon learning that the old coin-op croaker collects such items. Some beautiful coins, guys, thanks a million — and if you've ever got a sick videogame and can't find anyone in the middle of the night, just give me a call right away and — well, on second thought, give it a couple of aspirin and call me in the morning. It'll live.

Finally, let me again request that all winners who have yet to get their **EG** T-shirts, drop us a line with your size and address. We'll rush the shirt right out. Due to some current confusion here at the offices — a move is in progress — things have been a little slow on that front, and I would like to personally apologize to anyone who's been kept waiting. In fact, those gamers who were especially patient will find an extra goodie or two in their package.

Now, on with the games! First letter this month to get a shirt follows:

Q: Would you please tell me if Atari could make an attachment to fit my VCS, making it possible for better graphic and/or voice capability?

Also, did Coleco have to get per-

ColecoVision's VCS adapter lets it play all 2600-compatible software

mission to make the special unit that plays all Atari-compatible cartridges?

(Darin Sveneliid, Brooklyn, NY)

A: Certainly Atari could make such a device, as proven by the development of the Supercharger.

The reason that gamers can play such astonishing games as Demon Attack and Pitfall and Berzerk on their 2600 systems has nothing to do with hardware improvements since the days of Surround and Hangman. The simple fact is that the VCS is a very

HANGMAN

flexible software-oriented game-playing system. The great strides made in VCS-compatible software is owing to better programming, not hardware

changes.

Question two: No, Coleco did not ask Atari's permission to build its special 2600 emulator. In the first place, Atari probably wouldn't have given it and in the second place, Coleco is confident that its peripheral is *not* an infringement on any Atari-proprietary property.

Q: In the September issue of **EG**, Peter Ashdown asked the Doc about a game similar to Pac-Man. The Doctor suggested that it was a pirate edition. The game discussed is quite legal and named Pepper II.

Also, in the October "Coin-Op Classroom" the subject game was a story on the patterns for Crazy Kong, which is illegal.

(Raymond Ulibarri, Billings, MT)

A: After finally uncovering the issue of Time magazine in which Peter Ashdown was referring to, I believe it was indeed an illegal Pac-Man variant. At least, that's the word from Stan Jarocki, Midway's president.

As to Bill's strategies for Donkey Kong: He was assigned Donkey Kong, never mentioned any other game in the strategy and, as far as we know,

Pepper II, from Exidy, blends elements from games as varied as Pac-Man and Qix.

covered the legal, Nintendo version. But you're certainly correct about *Crazy Kong* being a rip-off. **EG** urges readers to avoid such trashy knock-offs, because they end up cheating both the game's creators and its players.

Anyone care to write one challenging the name of this column and handing it over to the Game Lawyer?!

Q: *Who finally won in that Atari vs. Odyssey[2] court case implying that* **K.C. Munchkin** *infringed on Atari's rights to* **Pac-Man***?*

K.C. MUNCHKIN

If Atari finally won, won't Astrocade's **Munchie Game** *bring about a court case similar to the O[2]/Atari fracas?*

(Brian Robins, Ardsley, NY)

A: Atari eventually won the famous *Munchkin* trial because the court found the *physical resemblance* between K.C. and the *Gobbler* too great. Frankly, Brian, the videogame world is

currently bogged down in a swamp of legal claims and counterclaims. Even in this world of foggy guidelines and non-stop litigation — don't forget Astrocade is suing several companies, Odyssey[2] has Mattel in court and Atari's legal department is sharpening the knife for Coleco — the Doctor can't believe the *Munchie* program will ever see the light of day.

Although the game continues to turn up in catalogs, Astrocade shipped no test versions and the company has, on several occasions, hinted that it might never actually be released.

TREASURE HUNTERS:

We're always happy to give some deserved fame to those other kind of supergamers. Sure, you all know the Frank Tetro's and Bill Heineman's, but what about

those arcaders who devote hours to finding clever little glitches and secret messages in their favorite game cartridges?

First made to spot the "easter egg" in Yars' Revenge was the erudite Steve Hauber. Here's how he did it: ". . .hitting. . .the swirl fired by the Qotile in midair three times causes the game

to stop and the programmer's initials to come on the screen." This is what is meant by the comment in the "helpful hints" section of the instruction book that reads: "And watch out for the ghost of the Yars! You've his mean streak, so stay off it."

"What are the initials? Find them yourself, but believe me, it isn't easy!"

Next up are a pair of Queens, NY Atanans who discovered a clever programming hole in the VCS Pac-Man. According to Charles Beaulien and Christopher Schreiber, score 100 points in any version of the gobble game then "!...go to the top of the screen. Move the Gobbler up and down rapidly in and out of the tunnel. He should stop, seem to disappear and, if you pull down on the joystick, should move straight down the screen — through dots, maze lines and ghosts!"

Way to go, valiant explorers of the Game Grid! Any other reader with additional little tricks that can be played on your videogame systems— please drop us a line and join the League of Videogame Treasure Hunters.

Q: I'm a devoted owner of the fantastic new ColecoVision system, and my favorite game is Ladybug. I've grabbed the vegetables and even gotten a bonus ladybug by spelling out "EXTRA" but neither I nor any of my friends can light up "SPECIAL"! Please! What happens when you light up all the orange letters!?!
(Near Insane, Richardson, TX)

LADYBUG

A: Dear "Near", take it easy. The Game Doctor takes the health of his patients seriously. Soooo, I sat up for three hours to find out what happens when you light up the bright, orange "SPECIAL" and discovered — a veggie hunt! That's right! Vegetables of every type and point value start popping up all over the screen, with nary a preda-

tory insect in sight. It's pig-out time for your ladybug, and worth a cool 100,000 points without half trying

Q&A QUICKIES: Mark Hentz has heard rumors about a game dubbed **Baby-Pac** and wonders if it's just someone pulling his playfeld? Well, Mark, it's true, and Midway is already at work on the project. Speaking of rumors, Kevin McHale of Laguna Beach was told there is a Atari VCS version of **Ms. P-M** on the way—yes? Yes. Not only is it ready, but sources report the Atari design staff really sweat blood to render a fantastic final product. Let's save our fingers crossed.

Donni Costantino, meanwhile, loves the Odyssey high score feature and wonders if there's any way to permanently preserve a high score, even when the system is turned off? The answer, once again, is yes though not on the O². Most home systems possess only what is known as "volatile" memory — that is, they forget everything once they are turned off. A system constructed with non-volatile memory would be able to keep track of high scores indefinitely.

Ian Benwell, all the way from Pointe Claire, Quebec, wants to know what cartridge will come packed with the new Atari 5200. At the moment it looks as though **Super Breakout** will be the system-starter. Several gaming fans have also written in wondering whether or not the independent software producers, such as Activision, will produce 5200-compatible games. As of now, the answer is no. The 5200 has to prove itself

And that about brings down the curtain on this issue's installment of the cathode dinner. Remember to write in for those T-shirts, and if you've had to wait more than a month, let me know and I'll see you get a little something extra.

Before we go, however, one last apologia from our October issue. On page 44 of that issue, we ran the playfeld from the VCS/2600 version of **Football** by Atari, but mislabeled it as the Intellivision program. The play-field on the far right of page 45 is, in fact, the NFL Football cartridge from Mattel.

And on that note of contrition, let us bid you all a happy month of gaming!

◎

COIN-OP CLASSROOM

Earth Versus the Floating Fortress in the Sky!

By BILL HEINEMAN

No one knows where it came from. One mile above Boise Idaho, a large floating city appeared and remained stationary for a whole week. All radar tracking stations report that the fortress doesn't exist, but spy planes report otherwise.

An agent was flown above the fortress and parachuted his way onto the landing field. The fortress was real. After two hours the agent leaped off the city and landed safely on the ground below (with his parachute of course!) His report is as follows:

The city is from another world. The name of the planet and its home star system is still a mystery. The fortress is bristling with laser cannons, force fields, surface-to-air missiles in silos and, jet aircraft all waiting for reinforcements before launching a massive strike on the northwestern United States. A second city, more powerful than this one, is now just within Pluto's orbit and will be in striking range within nine days.

The agent also destroyed a killer robot and stole its laser pistol. The design of the pistol allowed some scientists to construct a large scale model of the gun and outfit five jet fighters with this weapon before the second city reached Earth's orbit.

Your job is to command the five fighters into the first city and knock it out of commission, as well as destroying all of these jet fighters before they can bomb Boise. After this mission is done, you must fly your plane into the command city and destroy the Evil Robot **Zaxxon**. You must do this task without losing all your fighters.

The design of the first city seems to be that if you keep low enough, the mega-missile can't be shot at you. If you stay too high for more than three

seconds, the missile will be launched and you'd better duck quickly or a fighter will be lost. Refueling can be accomplished by blasting any one of the many red fuel tanks that can be found in the fortress.

You will encounter land-based anti-aircraft laser cannons and land-to-air missiles, all aimed precisely at you. To dodge the missiles, you must watch for the flames erupting from a silo and steer clear of the missiles' path. The missile will not track you. The guns are a different story. If you fly your ship just above their nozzles but below their roof, you can shoot the gun without fear of reprisal.

The altimeter built into your control panel will show your height above the ground. Use it to your advantage. The gauge has been notched in four places to match the height of the walls and force fields you will find. If the wall is extremely high, pull on the control stick until the gauge is in the highest 1/4 area and you are at the proper altitude to fly through the holes. (Note: You still have to rely on your best judgement for moving your plane left and right). This method will work for all of the four sizes of holes you'll find (i.e., if the hole is on the second floor you should fly within the second full-sized notch of the altimeter. If you are in the top notch on the bottom, the enemy lasers can hit you) and you'll see that there is a considerable margin for error in your favor, such as if your ship is directly between the third and fourth levels — your ship can fly through the third and fourth level holes.

An enemy plane can be destroyed by a direct hit on its nose but the plane's crew can arm and fire the plane's gun at yours while it is still on

ZAXXON PHASE I

SPACE SEQUENCE

FINAL PHASE

special honor. You will also burn fuel in space at a slower rate than flying through the city, but still watch that fuel gauge!

Once the first city is rendered out of order you must proceed to take out the command base. The second city is exactly like the first one, with the main exception of the surface-to-air missiles, but it has force fields galore. You have to seek out and destroy the Robot General Zaxxon and he will be lost. If you fail, over 1/4 of the United States will immediately be attacked. There is no indication that they will stop until they have the entire world!

Studies indicate that Zaxxon has one weak spot. He will be carrying a mega-missile in his left side and if you can hit this missile six times to detonate it, Zaxxon is no more. The proper height to shoot is exactly in the center of the second height bar. Otherwise he will shoot the missile at you and retreat. If you are lucky enough (???) to dodge the missile, Zaxxon will come back to shoot you again.

Good luck. The fate of billions is in your hands!

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"Third Wave" Videogaming Comes to Market

Of all the many new products that have crossed our desks this year, none has ever held as much promise as the magnificent ColecoVision videogame system. In many respects it makes all other systems technologically passe.

ColecoVision is not perfect, but it is closer to what every gamer dreams of owning (their very own arcade) than any other system has ever been.

console can stand alone, unencumbered by overly long connecting cables which is a big plus if the unit is to be placed on or near the connected TV set. RFI (radio frequency interference), the bane of all computers, is reduced by using the shortest possible cable runs from the output of the computer to the input of the television. Coleco, although it is not mentioned in the instruction manual, has made it possible

to use shorter runs of cable than are supplied with the system, making for a cleaner and neater installation. These cables, by the way, are available in many lengths from most video supply stores and, of course, from Radio Shacks throughout the country. If you only need a 5-ft. run, by all means buy a 5-ft. cable. You may need a small adapter to facilitate the installation when connecting the cable to the ColecoVision console. The cost for these parts is nominal, especially in view of the aesthetic and practical

MR TURTLE

The seriousness of Coleco's effort is immediately apparent as soon as the box is opened and the components removed.

It is then that the enormous (by videogame standards) power supply makes its presence felt. As with all computational devices, the size and capacity of the power supply is a strong indication of the speed and power built into the system. Bigger is better and Coleco's is huge. Large capacity also means the ability to handle optional components without the need to resort to supplemental powering apparatus.

Coleco has also opted to use plug-in cables for all inputs and outputs to and from the console. This means that the

VIDEO GAME SYSTEM

COLECOVISION

By HENRY B. COHEN

benefits that may be derived from their usage.

The power supply also plugs into the console, which means that, if in the future, Coleco decides to market add-on devices that require extra power, they may do so without having to rely on an additional power supply. The manufacturer can simply market an even stronger power supply to handle any contingency. With some systems peripherals may require their own power sources, but not so with Coleco.

The controllers are also plug-in types using an Atari-compatible jack. This means that any Atari-configured joy-

TURBO

(Left) the ColecoVision offers 32K memory capacity, VCS-adaptable joysticks and a front-slot for a number of peripherals including (below) the VCS adapter which plays all 2600 games

VCS EMULATOR

stick will operate normally with those games that require a single firing button. Those that utilize two firing buttons, for example Cosmic Avenger, will not work perfectly with an Atari joystick unless you're prepared to give up bombing runs for strafing attacks.

The console also features two I/O (input/output) ports, one (top-mounted) for the ROM carts, the other front-mounted for expansion modules. This configuration enables the ColecoVision console to function as a master component in an advanced computer system or remain as the world's best videogame system without the look of a hungry mother board showing its exposed terminals.

Styling is contemporary, all black save for the front panel, and very low and sleek. While admittedly, styling is a matter of taste, we have not found a soul who didn't like the look of the unit and we commend Coleco for a job well done. Of course looks sometimes have their price in terms of performance, a point we will address shortly

ColecoVision is also the only videogame system we know of that can

By HENRY F. COHEN

"Third Wave" Videogaming Comes to Market

All the scanty new products that have competitive-minded programmers working overtime have become the major impetus to get new cartridges to market to satisfy the demand from videogame players who are becoming increasingly sophisticated about the quality of the games they play. Consumers are reluctant, but it is closer to what every game dreams of. It may not cost much to buy but any other system has ever been.

Consumers are not immune, but it is closer to what every game dreams of. It may not cost much to buy but any other system has ever been.

In our dealer runs of sales that are supplied with the system, plunging for a few of the best available TV games. The machines can be used in many lengths from one cartridge to the next, or using the standard joystick cable runs from the output of the computer to the input of the television. Colorful graphics is one of the features that television manufacturers need. The color information when connecting the cable to the Cablevision circuits. You could for these early introductions a year or two in view of the aesthetic and practical

benefits that may be derived from their usage.

Video game royalty also plays into the arena, which means that, if in the future, Cablevision its hand at many, many of the new systems. When you see a new system, you can judge the quality of the game by playing them in many lengths from one cartridge to the next. The manufacturer can simply install the basic configuration that is compatible with their system. The controllers can also plug in types using an elaborate cartridge port. These controllers feature a plug so that they may be removed with ease.

The console also features two red buttons that require a single fingertip touch. These were utilized in early Atari ones, but its size may surprise some users who first notice that the Atari system has standard joysticks built in. You can judge the quality of the game by playing them in many lengths from one cartridge to the next.

The consoles of Coleco's two commonly appearing as soon as the box is opened and the components removed. The first thing that one notices is the unusual black surface on its arrays of buttons and controller connectors at the corners of the case. The capacity of the power supply is a strong indication of the speed and power built into the system. Rapid capacity also means the ability to handle special components without stressing the system's processing operation.

Coleco has also taken to one thing to make its software accessible to and from the console. This means that the box slot the open end of each cartridge once can stand alone several games compatible with a cartridge-based library allows the one cartridge to be used with any variety of software available for the unit. The system can also be played on many game systems, and it is closer to what every game dreams of. It may not cost much to buy but any other system has ever been.

Using a contemporary all-black cast for the front panel and red tone bar makes the console a handsome addition to any television console, and makes it possible to play games in any room of the house. With its small size and light weight, the console fits easily into place. This means that you can play games in any room of the house. The prospect of that prospect is a compact and comfortable experience.

ZAXXON

be safely operated on a carpet or bed without fear of overheating. Coleco engineering must have spent much time to design a convection-cooled unit that draws its cooling air from the back panel, rather than from underneath. Venting of hot air is through the top, so nothing should ever be placed on or behind the unit that impedes the flow of air through the console. This is

a most useful and thoughtful feature, one not heralded in Coleco's advertising or promotional materials. Usually we are compelled to warn potential users about the dangers of overheating—not so with ColecoVision.

Continuing with the physical appraisal, there are some changes we would like to see made in construction

of the console. All are inexpensive, and all would improve it significantly.

The unit needs an LED on/off indicator light. ColecoVision completely blanks the screen very shortly after a game is completed. If you leave the room you may easily forget that the unit and the TV are on. As ColecoVision's power supply gets quite warm when operational (and even Coleco warns you to unplug it when not in use) and your television may be cooking along with it, and LED would most likely prevent owners from inadvertently leaving the units on for prolonged periods of time.

The second criticism involves the ROM port (game slot). A spring-loaded aluminum door protects the innards of the console when there is no cartridge in place in the console. It is displaced by the insertion of a game cartridge. It may also be displaced by the lightest of finger pressure. In that event, some of the guts of the machines are exposed to prying eyes and little fingers. To prevent damage to the machine, a simple plastic sleeve could be placed within the console so that at no time is any part of the machine accessible except for the cartridge connector. This would also help

protect against the insertion of a slightly misaligned cartridge, something that can occur during exuberant play. Similarly, the door to the expansion port slides up and down too easily and might be sprung to keep it closed except when entry to the connector must be made. If left in the "up" position, little fingers as well as dust and dirt may enter the machine.

As mentioned, these corrections are inexpensive to make at the manufacturing level and we consider them important although they won't affect game play whatsoever. They will however, lengthen the life of this finely engineered machine.

Reverting to the plus side, we believe that this system is the closest yet in terms of providing arcade quality graphics, sound effects, play-action and overall performance.

We have found the quality of the television signal produced to be second to none. Color saturation is excellent and the sound effects must be heard to be fully appreciated. The machine plays tunes with the quality and clarity of a true musical synthesizer—it's that good.

Currently the machine is limited to handling 32K programs. The expansion port could allow ColecoVision to be upgraded to play games identical to those in the arcades when the price of memory chips comes down a little more. For the moment, each cartridge makes a few small compromises versus the arcade original but rarely do these deletions intrude upon game-playing action. Coleco has wisely opted to delete things like attract modes and has left most, if not all, of the primary game playing elements intact.

The discussion so far has covered the console and the games, but not the controllers. Here the engineers have apparently taken a backseat to the stylists. While the controllers work about as well as the average factory offerings, they are not as close to the state-of-the-art as is the rest of the ColecoVision system.

ColecoVision controllers have a short, stubby and fairly imprecise joystick. In fact, it's the same design as used in the company's tabletop arcade units only somewhat larger. Two firing buttons are situated alongside the joystick. The remainder of the unit features a superior 12 button touch panel. Overlays have been announced for some games but EG has not received any games that require their use so far.

Because the controllers are so big they are easy to drop during strenuous action. They may also be too large to fit the hands of children very well at all.

A more elegant solution would be to make the touch panel portion of the controller removable as it isn't often needed during play. Another improvement we would like to see is the use of leaf switches rather than cheap clicker switches. This would make for a more precise and vastly more durable joystick than that which is currently included with ColecoVision.

All of this costs, but the current controller leaves one with the feeling Coleco has spent some money but that they didn't spend it all that wisely.

One of the strongest features of the system is its ability to accept a variety of add-ons through the expansion and controller ports. For the soon-to-be-released Turbo, a special module will be supplied with the game cart (usable with other yet-to-be-announced cartridges) that houses a steering wheel of some proportions and a gas pedal. In use, the pedal's removed and placed on the floor and a single controller is placed next to the steering wheel. The joystick acts as a gear shift in this driving configuration. With its steering wheel, gear shift and gas pedal residing on the floor the system will provide the game with all the primary controls of a real automobile. Now that's the height of arcade realism!

The expansion port also allows for the use of an Atari VCS emulator which will be released shortly. This will permit ColecoVision to play any Atari VCS

game cart. We also suspect that the brilliant games of the Arcadia Supercharger will also be playable through the system. An intellivision emulator is also a possibility and Coleco is working on a keyboard and "Ram Cram" for ColecoVision which should turn the system into a full-scale, high-powered home computer system.

This totally modular approach must be commended, especially when mitigated by the fact that the console need never be modified in any way to still remain the most advanced videogame system around.

The games—and we have had five to play with: Cosmic Avenger, Venture, Donkey Kong, Lady Bug and SMURF—all look great on the screen, sound terrific and, with WICO joysticks play beautifully. Even with Coleco's own controller, they are delightful cartridges.

CARNIVAL

Coleco has promised arcade-quality games and play for its system. It has come close, closer by a wide margin than any other company. Only the cost of the hardware to power the software stands in the way of ColecoVision totally duplicating the coin-op experience in the home.

On balance, ColecoVision is the finest system we have ever seen for the home. (Remember the Atari 5200 is still in prototype stage as we go to press.)

Given the manufacturer's willingness to cater to the needs and requests of gamers, Coleco may be able to make it even better as time goes on.

Destroy the MCP in Tron!

By JOYCE WORLEY

TRON
Tomytronic/$55

Every gamer who saw the Disney movie "Tron" probably yearned to slip inside the amazing computer world to do battle with the enemy Sark and the Master Control Program. This isn't quite possible yet, but the stand-alone game of **Tron** may be the next best thing. Race Sark in the light cycles and do battle in the disc-toss game. Then come face to face with the Master Control Program deep inside the heart of the computer. It's man against machine in these electronic contests. The enemy will get you in the end, but see how many points Tron can amass before Sark destroys him.

Tron features three games in one, but you've got a regular army of on-screen heroes to help you in the battles. Four Tron figures line the left side of the screen, faced by four Sarks with the MCP backing every move.

The first contest is the Light Cycle Game. The blue cycle belongs to Tron, the gamer's on-screen counterpart, and the red cycle is piloted by Sark. The gamer uses a four-direction control button to drive his cycle. Holding down the speed button accelerates. Each light cycle leaves a wall behind it as it travels across the screen. Try to destroy Sark's cycle by making it crash into a wall, while the computer-driven cycle works equally hard at making Tron crash into Sark's cycle or a wall. The race continues until all three enemy light cycles are destroyed, or until all of Tron's cycles are gone.

If you successfully defeat three of

Sark's light cycles, the next screen appears, showing the number of surviving Trons and Sarks eligible to play the ring game. Each Tron has four rings. Sark moves vertically up and down the screen, then tosses the disk. Move Tron into position to catch the ring and hurl it back at Sark. Try to release it so that he can't reach the disk in time to intercept it. The game moves to the next level when Sark loses all four rings, or ends if the arcader runs out of on-screen heroes to fight his battle.

Last is the attack on the MCP. Tron is on the left, facing the Master Control Program on the right. Surrounding the

MCP is a barrier which Tron must break through using disks left from the ring game. Throw the first one to create an opening in the barrier. The walls of the barrier will begin to move up and down, and it takes careful timing to release another disk that will penetrate the opening and destroy the MCP. Miss the opening and the barrier repairs itself. Try

A pair of playfields from Tomy's stand-alone version show the Ring Game (left) and the MCP version (right)

again, by using a disk to create an opening, then attempt to slip another ring through it

If you use all the disks without destroying the MCP, the game ends. Destroy the MCP, and the game begins again with the Light Cycle game, but this time the cycles move faster. Reaching a score of 2000 gains an additional Tron figure, with a maximum of five Trons at one time. The game continues until all Trons are killed.

The animation for Tron is very pretty. Tron's light cycles are blue, while Sark's are red and green. The figures of Tron and Sark are humanoid and very convincing in the ring toss game. And the MCP sits in regal green and red splendor, leering at all the action throughout the entire contest. Successfully completing all three trials makes the speed increase the next time through. The game speeds up six times and then remains level in subsequent rounds.

Tron isn't very difficult. It's easy to outmaneuver Sark in the cycle game. Then the ring toss game can be quickly won because Sark's throws follow an easily determined pattern. The arcader can usually manage to put Tron into the correct position to catch the rings Sark throws

The third game is the hardest, but even it yields easily to a little strategy. As the barrier around the MCP moves up and down, a

with the pencil-and-paper version. But what a difference technology has made! The ships' locations are programmed into the computer and the battle is accompanied by a barrage of realistic sounds. The old saw is a modern thriller in this highly successful adaptation from Milton Bradley.

Each player has a fleet of five ships: carrier, battleship, submarine destroyer and PT boat. Players program the location of the fleets in one or two ways, instantly or manually. To use the instant programming feature, choose one of the 100 location patterns from the game's instruction booklet. These patterns pinpoint the placement of the ships, and each has an identification code number. Simply place the ships on your hidden ocean grid according to the pattern, then enter the code number into the computer. The game programs those preselected locations

If either player doesn't fancy any of

ELECTRONIC BATTLESHIP

Milton Bradley/$45

Great swells pound around you, and the deck is awash with the wakes of explosions. Direct your own fire against the hidden enemy. Your cannon roars and the hull quakes with the recoil. You're the man behind the guns in this rollicking naval combat, in command of a fleet of five ships

Electronic Battleship is as cruel at sea that should be familiar to everyone who's ever goofed off in study hall

computer monster. Time each throw, using the shadow as a guide. Upper levels of the game are faster, but releasing each disk when the shadow across MCP's face is in the same spot, will wipe that silly smirk off his mug.

This is a very clever adaptation of some of the best elements of the Walt Disney movie. Tron may not be the most challenging game you've ever played, but the cuteness of the animation makes up for a lot

falls across the face of the

the 100 preselected patterns, he can program in his own locations by entering the coordinates manually for each ship. This takes a bit longer, since there are 17 coordinates to be programmed into the machine, but it's a very simple procedure that's not difficult to master.

Once the ships' locations are programmed, each player's console will emit a single "whoop" indicating the battle is ready to begin. The first player chooses a target location on the upright target grid which represents the enemy's ocean map. Mark the spot with a white peg, then enter the letter/number coordinates for that location. Press the fire button, and the whistling sound of a missile in flight tells you the attack is underway. If you've picked a correct target coordinate, there'll be an explosion and a flash of light behind the ship silhouette on the console. Announce the letter and number of the target coordinate to your opponent, who must reveal which ship has been hit. Replace the white peg with a red one to mark a hit on the upright grid. Different ships call for varying numbers of hits in order to sink them. You'll have to continue firing to locate the remaining coordinates of the target ship.

After firing, if you hear the sound of a missile without the explosion and flash of light, you've missed. Leave the white peg on the upright target grid so you won't shoot at that spot again.

Gamers fire in rotation, launching one missile at a time. The first

ELECTRONIC BATTLESHIP

one to sink all five rival ships is the winner. Three sets of "whoop" signals salute the victor.

Electronic Battleship has a substantial-looking playboard, complete with storage compartments for the ships and peg-makers. The ocean grids are sea green, held in a battleship-grey plastic holder. The ships themselves are cleverly formed immatures made of plastic Pegs protruding from each ship's bottom allow their secure placement on the ocean grid, and holes on the decks receive pegs to indicate hits when your enemy has zeroed his cannon in on you.

Play is greatly enhanced by the sounds built into the game. Throughout the engagement, a continuous beep and ping sonar pulse adds a dimension of urgency. If programming coordinates, either enter the location of your ships or firing at the opponent's fleet, each correct entry is signalled by a tone. This is a

thoughtful touch, and helps to avoid mistakes if you make an error or change your mind, a Clear Memory button allows you to start over, and this too is indicated by a tone. Pressing the fire button produces the sound of a flying missile. Score a hit and an explosion is accompanied by a flashing light and "whoop" signals indicating success. Three sets of triple "whoops" indicate victory when the battle ends.

There aren't many flaws in this game. It would have been nice if the storage compartments had lids to hold the playing pieces securely. Other than that, you couldn't ask for much more

Milton Bradley has added new life to an old classic.

DEFENDER
Entex/550

Command a Defender ship and save the Earth from wave after wave of aliens from outer space. This galactic

A pile of adaptable first flame's sliced atrix aim to show the Bug game belt and the didn't rocket sight

ELECTRONIC BATTLESHIP

Across the top...

the 900 powerboat patterns. So can program the new machines by entering the coordinates manually for each try...

Once the ships bleachers are programmed, each player commands an entire naval fleet of five vessels in a sea battle using radar. Each player has a fleet of five ships carrier battleship submarine destroyer and the Patrol boat the super stars as the center of the battle and most it must be hit four times to be sunk...

DEFENDER

Defender is a classic game that... the Earth have seven other wave of alien aliens descend...

DEFENDER

nasties have a ceaseless hunger for humans, and it's your job to try to save the last 10 humans still alive on the Earth's surface. The enemies sweep down and capture their victims, then merge with them to become mutants possessing human intelligence and cunning, but with the unremittingly evil appetites of the aliens. Now Defender can be played in a stand-alone version that has many of the features of the Williams' com-op.

The defender ship can fire lasers and smart bombs as it flies above the planet's scrolling surface. The enemy attacks first with waves of Landers. Landers fire at the defender, but direct their drive efforts toward capturing the handful of human survivors on the world. The Lander darts down, then rises swiftly back to the stratosphere with the human dangling from its claws. Shoot the Lander without hitting the human, and it drops the Earthling. If he's within four levels of the bottom, he falls safely back to the ground, but a greater fall is fatal. Accelerate quickly enough to catch the human with your ship, and gain 50 points. It's worth an additional 50 points if you can deposit him safely on the ground.

If the Lander makes it to the top of the screen with a kidnapped prey, the two life forms merge to become a deadly Mutant — much faster and more intelligent than the Lander. The Mutant seeks out and destroys the Defender ship if possible.

Entex has managed to squeeze in an astounding number of player controls. First choose between two skill levels. Then use the green speed control knob to boost the tempo within the level you've chosen at skill level two — top speed — the play races along at a pace to challenge even an expert. Choose

silent or sound play, then blast off into adventure.

Seven buttons control the action during play. They raise the ship up or down on the screen, or reverse the direction of flight. Use the thrust button to fly faster, then fire the ship's lasers at every target that gets in range. Reserve smart bombs for real emergencies, they destroy all alien life within range. As a last resort, the hyperspace button can relocate the ship to a different position on the screen. These seven controls are all that is needed to maneuver the ship above the planet's surface.

The 1½-in. by 2-in. display is bright and easy to see. The ship, humans and scoring display are blue, while the aliens are red. Mutants are formed by combining the clawed red alien with the blue human which forms the head, a very clever piece of matrixing.

If the aliens succeed in abducting all the humans, the planet explodes. The ship is hurled into the inky darkness of space, and there must face wave after wave of attacking mutants until it's finally destroyed in the battle.

Unfortunately, the graphics are somewhat disappointing. The humans are just tiny head-shaped blobs. The Landers are sufficiently alien-looking and with the addition of the human head, make convincing mutants, but the defender ship itself is only a tiny sliver of color; it's a pity the designers couldn't have made it look more preposessing. The planet is not even depicted, a little strip of terrain would have been nice.

But it's a cute unit with fast, though not too difficult, action. Entex has made a credible attempt to bring a very popular arcade game to the stand-alone field

INSIDE GAMING

Rob Fulop: Arcade Noir

By Will Richardson

The term "film noir" was coined by the movie critics of France to describe the genre of American films, made largely during the 40's, that emphasized shadows and stark, black and white night shots. They frequently even used their titles to reflect their ambiance—"They Live by Night", "Nightmare Alley",—and took as subject matter everything from hard-boiled detective stories to gangsters-on-the-run yarns.

These "films of the night" told their stories against black, shadowy backdrops that mirrored the bleak despair of the characters' lives. The night became the film director's perfect metaphor, and the camera's perfect background.

The man who created 1982's Arkie-winner for Game of the Year, Demon Attack, might justifiably be dubbed the first master of "arcade noir". Rob Fulop has designed a handful of the most well-known videogames in the field and he's yet to create a game with even a glimmer of daylight.

"I like to work against a black background," explains Rob. This love of the darkness, however, indicates neither morbid tastes nor vampirism—Rob just loves colors, and as he says, "colors stand out much better against a dark backdrop."

Anyone who's seen Rob's outstanding output can testify to his effective use of color against blackness.

ROB FULOP

Known primarily for his space games such as Demon Attack and Cosmic Ark, his first assignment after answering a want ad and joining the Atari design staff was, oddly, a driving contest. Anyone care to take a guess as to which driving game? That's right, it was the VCS version of the coin-op hit Night Driver. The die was cast. Rob Fulop was on a dark road, and he liked what he saw. Minimal effects, when contrasted with total lack of light and color, seemed more impressive to the gamer's eye.

Rob then went to work on his next VCS coin-op translation —the daunting Missile Command. Again working

against a black sky, Fulop produced a full-bodied recreation of the arcade smash. The sight of all those missiles streaking down the darkened playfield must have stirred Rob even further. The translation itself was successful enough to cop an Arkie last year as Best Solitaire Game, winning Rob his first — but likely to be far from last — Arcade Award.

Unfortunately, Atari doesn't credit its game designers, so no one at the time was aware of who had done such a fantastic job. Some hard-core arcaders, however, knew his initials.

"Who is 'R.F.'?!?" demanded our most astute readers, having spotted Rob's initials in Missile Command's incredibly devious "easter egg". To see for yourself, insert the cartridge in your VCS and turn to Game #13. Hit the reset and don't touch that joystick! Watch while missiles destroy cities one-by-one. When the smoke clears, Fulop's initials pop up in the spot where the city farthest right once stood.

Further "R.F. modulation" turns up in the 400/800 version of Space Invaders, Rob's final project for Atari. When the spaceship on the extreme left side of the screen reaches the bottom of the playfield, two of the very lowest aliens turn into letters — you got it, R.F. strikes again!

It was after this that several top people from both Atari and Intellivision formed Imagic, a double-threat inde-

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DEMON ATTACK

NIGHT DRIVER

pendent videogame company to provide software for both the VCS and Intellivision systems. One of the prize design catches for the newfound company in terms of VCS design was Fulop. Rob's debut program, *Demon Attack*, took 2600 graphic pieces few gamers or programmers ever thought they could go. Multiple invaders, fission demons, star-spangled moths and a whole universe of wildly colored and increasingly treacherous monsters populate this coin-op style shoot-'em-up.

The creation of some of the newer VCS programs has given the system's critics pause. Many industry experts had written off the VCS as a viable game-playing system, damning it obsolete and crude. Designers like Rob Fulop continue to prove otherwise.

"I'm more impressed with the VCS now than I was when I first started designing for it," Fulop declares in his typical, low-key manner. "It's such a software-based system," he marvels, adding that the use of new chip-sets will grant the 2600 even more design options.

Rob is also impressed with the design possibilities inherent in the new Supercharger unit that runs games

into the 2600 via a standard audio cassette recorder, on which the programs are encoded. "The increased RAM will allow you to move more objects on screen while the full 8K will give programmers even more flexibility.

Asked if he was a big videogamer himself, Rob admits, "I'm a watcher, I'm really not that good. I go to arcades a lot, but it's mostly to watch."

In the next breath, however, Rob makes the typical author's complaints about his own arcade-inspired creation. "I was a little disappointed in *Demon Attack*," he confesses. "It tops off too quickly. I'm able to consistently get through every level, which is why I tried to make *Cosmic Ark* a more challenging game."

Ah, yes, Rob's latest work from Imagic. Released simultaneously with Dennis Koble's brilliant **Atlantis** (VCS), the two games are actually interconnected. Rob chuckles as he explains the story. In *Atlantis*, gamers utilize a trio of anti-aircraft weaponry to take out the overhead invaders and protect the underwater city. Like *Cosmic Ark*, it has a distinct arcade flavor without resembling any existing coin-op (though the initial sequence of Rob's contest owes a debt to Midway's *Space Zap*).

As the player controlling Atlantis' defenses finally falters, the entire undersea world explodes, but not before a mysterious spaceship launches into space! The craft is actually a space ark dispatched by the dying Atlanteans, used to explore the universe to gather new species.

Cosmic Ark lets arcaders with a double-day scenario. The Ark must initially enter a planet's atmosphere,

despite asteroid-swarms, by using weaponry that fires in all four compass directions. By simply shifting the joystick left, right or up or down, a blast is fired, disintegrating the oncoming space rock. Successful completion of this scenario initiates phase two. The Ark descends close to the planet's surface and gamers lower a tiny scout ship from the Ark's massive underside. These scouts possess no weapons, only tractor beams with which they must capture the pairs of life forms scampering about on the surface.
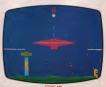
One other complication is that the left and right sides of the screen feature a pair of penscope-like laser cannons that can demolish any scout that comes within range. The arcader must beam up the two life forms and get back to the ship before a renewed meteor assault on the Ark.

"There are eight different sets of creatures," Rob explains proudly, adding, "but very few players get to see all of them."

Now that the first videogame sequel has come into being, can arcaders expect an entire saga, spanning time and space? Fulop grins again as he adds: "Remember, at the end of *Cosmic Ark* — another ship takes off!" ◑

COSMIC ARK

COSMIC ARK

ANDROID RAIDERS ATTACK!

HOT GUNNER COULD SAVE CITY!

With attack choppers dropping android commandos and fighter-bombers delivering payload after payload, our city would be destroyed by now if it weren't for one brave gunner...you. Only your quick eye and quicker trigger finger can hold off wave after wave of android parachutists. Only your skill can keep them from tunneling under the city and taking you out. The game is Commando Raid, and you're the city's last hope.

US GAMES
commando raid
VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGE

The action gets faster with each commando attack wave!

★★★

ZAPPER A FAST BLAST!

HOT GAME CHALLENGES THE BEST!

Just when you think you've thought fast enough, you've got to think faster! You've got to fire left and right to zap deadly asteroids...one hit by the Doomsday asteroid and your saucer blows!

But that's just defense! To win you've got to fire overhead with incredible skill to blast away the letters of the alien's language. And it will only work if you follow the computer's lead. Can you beat Word Zapper through all 24 games? Can anybody?

US GAMES
word zapper

Why is Ronald Evans smiling? Did he beat the zapper?

FIERY DISASTER AVERTED!

BOLD FIREFIGHTER SAVES HUNDREDS!

It's a race against time and the fury of fire that can destroy innocent occupants...and you! You're the firefighter...do you have the skill and strategy it takes to beat Towering Inferno?

It was the worst fire you'd ever seen...a high-rise going up like a torch. With a different fire-filled maze on every floor. And hundreds rush on way out...unless you could get them out to the rescue chopper.

Relive the movie in this challenging maze game!

★ ★ ★

MISSING PERSON MYSTERY SOLVED!

ENTIRE FAMILY CAUGHT UP IN SEARCH.

It seems simple enough...somebody disappears, and you find them. But this is a spooky video world, with electronic holey-holes that happen where you least expect!

You can seek a friend or human opponent...or take on the computer! You've got to beat the clock, or your Sneak 'N Peak opponent has you dead to rights!

Four different rooms with lots of sneaky places to hide.

★ ★ ★

SWEATY PALMS ARE GUARANTEED!

WHEN YOU WANT HOT ACTION ON YOUR ATARI, LOOK FOR THE NAME

US GAMES

ARCADE AWARDS

duplicate the success of **Scramble** with its hot action and challenging scenarios.

Certificate of Merit: **Hyperchase** (GCE, for the Vectrex). At this point in time, **Hyperchase** may well be the best driving game available for any home system. It features gear shifting, variable acceleration and braking, and enough scenic variety to keep would-be Mario Andrettis at the throttle.

Honorable Mentions

Although the scope of the Arcade Awards has been expanded dramatically this year, there are still many, many worthy games which will not win an award. Sometimes, this has nothing to do with quality. A few potential winners failed to reach the judges in time, others are editions of games already winning an Arcade Award or Certificate of Merit for a different system, and still others simply ran into overpowering competition in the categories in which they were most likely to cop an award.

Here's a brief list of some of the better games in each of the four broad Arcade Award divisions:

Videogame Cartridges: **Planet Patrol** (Spectravision), **Encounter at L-5** (Data Age), **Towering Inferno** (U.S. Games), **Threshold** (Tigervision), **Demon Attack** (Imagic, for Intellivision), **Stampede** (Activision, for Intellivision), **Donkey Kong** (Coleco, for the Atari VCS), **Wizard of War** (CBS/Gabriel, for the Atari VCS), **Missile Command** (Atari, for the 5200), **Super Breakout** (Atari, for the VCS), **Super Breakout** (Atari, for the 5200), and **Commando Raid** (U.S. Games, for the Atari VCS).

Computer Games: **Protector** (Synapse, for the Atari 400/800), **GPS Sorceress** (Avalon Hill, for most systems), **Night of Diamond** (Sir-Tech, for the Apple II), **The Prisoner 2** (Edu-Ware, for the Apple II), **Star Blaster** (Piccadilly Software), **Shuffleboard** (DSI, for the Apple II), **Kamikaze** (Hayden Software, for the Apple II), **Air Strike** (London Software, for the Atari 400/800), **Darts** (Thorn/EMI, for the Atari 400/800), **Galactic Gladiator** (SSI, for the Apple II), **Swashbuckler** (Datamost, for the Apple II) and **Snack Attack** (Sirius Software, for the Apple II).

Stand-Alone Games: **Electronic Battleship** (M.B. Electronics), **Tron** (Tomytronic). All solar-powered games (Bandai), **Arcade Time wristwatch** (GCE), **Taro** (Fidelity Electronics), and **Othello** (Gabriel).

Coin-Ops: **Galaga** (Midway), **Space Dungeon** (Taito), **Tunnel Hunter** (Centuri), **The Pit** (Centuri), **Dig-Dug** (Atari), **Stargate** (Williams), **Reactor** (Gottlieb), **Jungler** (Stern), **Red Alert** (GGI), **Omega Race** (Midway), **Tutenkham** (Stern), and **Fantasy** (Rock-ola).

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constantly take the movement characteristics of the robots into account. If you can get some of the android attackers to run into walls or each other, there'll be that many you won't have to personally shoot. Evil Otto can also lend some timely, if unintentional, aid. Hover near the exit to the room in which you are currently playing when Otto pays a visit. Let him wipe out all the robots near the center of the playfield before exiting to the next maze section.

Berzerk is a relatively simple game, with a minimal number of elements to consider. Yet it holds up well under repeated play, because there is so much variety from round to round. And this edition of Berzerk will let you explore all of them to your heart's content. A fine job by Atari.   ☺

before the face catches up. If the gamer runs out of time or is caught in the flames, he makes an ash out of himself.

When he escapes the building successfully the program dishes out points in direct relation to how much of an inferno was produced, and how much of the floor was left standing when the fire died out. There are five floors to each building and each floor becomes more difficult as the gamer works down toward the first floor and out the front door.

Bonus points are earned when an entire floor is burned down. A helpful hint, especially when the fuse is set at its longest, is to take a brief look at floor one, the most difficult maze, before starting out since most times there is only one path through to the exit. A quick jaunt in the wrong direction can be fatal and the novice gamer will have to toil hard to get to that first floor.

The top scores are saved on the disk, always a nice feature. Control of the firebug can be with keyboard or joystick. One detraction is that the keyboard has set keys instead of user-defined keys. Another setback is that the keys are clustered on the left side, with the button for dropping the cans being the space bar and the key for picking up the cans the return key.

That arrangement makes it extremely difficult for the right hand to be used for direction. The game works much better with a two-button joystick. One button drops the cans, another picks them up and the joystick controls the direction.

Even with a good joystick, movement of the man is a bit sluggish, though a free-floating stick will yield the best results. *Firebug* is a safe way to play with fire without getting burned.

(Rick Teverbaugh)

SEA FOX
Broderbund Software/Apple II/48K disk

Ed Hobbs' aquatic shoot-'em-up is inspired by the wartime duel between attack submarines and merchant ships. The arcade commands a torpedo-firing sub which must sink the convoy ships while battling a veritable armada of enemy submarines, destroyer escorts and magnetic homing mines.

The program is organized as a succession of increasingly arduous missions. The arcader must be careful not to squander the supply of three submarines, available one at a time, during the first couple of missions, because the fighting gets pretty fierce when the computer-controlled subs begin firing torpedoes of their own, and the destroyer escorts start laying down a carpet of depth charges.

Like many newer computer games, *Sea Fox* permits the player to select from several possible control schemes. There's a somewhat complicated method for moving and firing the submarine with the keyboard as well as the regulation two-button apple-compatible joystick. The latter is much preferable to the other two, though keyboardists are offered the additional option of redefining the control keys according to their own whims.

Controlling the submarine with the joystick is quite straightforward. The stick moves the ship in the desired direction. The upper action button fires a torp toward the surface where vessels skim across the water, while the other button launches a metal fish horizontally. Your sub can fire one torpedo in each direction simultaneously if desired, but only one missile of each type can be on the screen at a time. Missing the mark with a torpedo, especially a vertically launched one, leaves the sub extremely vulnerable to return attack, especially in missions which include

the DE's and their depth charges. Even worse than an outright miss is hitting one of the hospital ships that cross the screen from left to right immediately below the line of merchant ships. It's a violation of international law. The torpedo bounces harmlessly off a floating hospital and can destroy your sub if you don't move out of the way quickly. In reality, though, the greater penalty is that the straying torp will have to cross the screen twice — from the depths to the surface and back to the bottom — before you can fire another rocket toward any surface target.

Just as in its distant relative *Star Blazer*, time is a critical concern in *Sea Fox*. Each submarine starts with 1,200 units of fuel and 30 torpedoes. A ship that runs out of fuel immediately heads for Davey Jones' Locker, while running out of torpedoes simply leaves your craft at the mercy of the real navy.

Fortunately, a friendly green supply submarine periodically crosses the bottom of the playfield from left to right. Shortly before it reaches the edge of the playfield, it ejects a transoid dolphin with a packet of necessary supplies. The player must cruise the submarine over the packet before a giant clam can rush into view from the right and gobble it up. Don't harm the loyal dolphin though, because its finny friends will pop up out of nowhere to demolish the submarine in retaliation. You can generally count on having two chances per submarine to get resupplied in this manner, and it's a wise admiral who watches the fuel gauge closely even in the heat of fighting.

High resolution graphics give this war game an extra dimension. This is one of the rare programs in which a missile looks like a rocket, not just a white dash. Watching a merchant ship burst into flames and slowly sink beneath the waves gives the submarine commander a much greater feeling of accomplishment than if the target vessel just winked out of existence in a fireball.

High scores depend on never losing sight of the prime objective in *Sea Fox*: sinking cargo ships. It is important to torpedo as many rival submarines as possible to build up your point total, and failure to deal with the DE's will ultimately prove fatal, but the only way to progress from mission to mission is to wipe out those convoy boats.

Getting at the convoy ships through

the screen of hospital boats can be tricky at first. The best approach is to take advantage of the fact that the hospital ships are faster than the cargo vessels. Wait until the floating hospital inches ahead of the convoy ship immediately above it — and then take dead aim at the stern portion of the target craft. By the time your torp gets where it's going, its path should be unobstructed.

Sea Fox will never be confused with a realistic military simulation, but it offers oceans of fun for target game fans.

(Steve Davidson)

PIG PEN
Datamost/Apple II/48K Disk

Tired of eating up dots in one form or another in first this maze and then that? Well, how about dropping dots around a maze while being chased by wild pigs? Perhaps there can be some forgiveness if this is referred to as hamming it up?

Pig Pen starts the player in the left-center section of the maze. The pigs come out of the center pen and the player must cover the maze with dots before being chomped by the

swine. At four locations on the maze there are big pits that enable the gamer to go after the pigs and turn them into tasty morsels with 200-800 points.

A drawback to the program comes from the maze not needing to be covered completely. Certain areas, especially near the center pen won't accept dots, so the gamer is merely wasting time by going through those areas. A human target can't advance to the next rack, and there are four, without going over every area and dropping dots. Just one missing dot in some far corner of the maze can mean the difference between life and death here.

There is a bonus ear of corn that appears in the maze at irregular intervals and is worth 1,000 points. There is a bonus man for each 10,000 points scored.

High score and current score are displayed, but the high score disappears and registers zero each time the game is booted. If the phone rings or nature calls there is the ESC key to freeze the action.

At the first level the pigs aren't very

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clever or really very much interested in collecting some human dinner, but going up to the second or third rack makes the swine a bit more of a nuisance. The gamer can also control the difficulty of the challenge by selecting whether he will be chased by 1-8 wild boars.

Pig Pen plays much better with joystick than keyboard. The keyboard controls are user-defined, which is a plus, but just tapping the key will move the man only a short distance in the needed direction. Holding down the key yields a speed almost too great to be controlled. A joystick provides a more proper means of control, though

it is still very easy to get the man going way too fast to make the turn exactly where planned.

Overall, it's an inventive idea with enough strong characteristics to outweigh some smaller problems.

(Rick Teverbaugh)

TRIVIA TREK
Swifty Software/Atari 400&800
32K disk

Jerry White, one of the earliest software programmers for the Atari computers, has written virtually every type of videogame for this system, from arcade to computerized board games. *Trivia Trek*, however, is of interest not

for its fancy graphics — it's all text — or a revolutionary play mechanic, since the pursuit of "trivia" is at least fifteen years old. What he has produced is a fantastic program that should prove popular whether being played solo by a high-tech maven of minutia or at a party with a dozen or so gamers involved.

Trivia, as I'm sure our readers know, is the pursuit of relatively minor bits of information from the world of popular culture. Old movies, TV shows, cartoons, sports — all are suitable subjects for the dedicated trivi-addict, and all turn up on White's amusing program in the form of multiple-choice question/answers. Questions are selected by topic, and if the gamer has a few bits of trivia to add, that can also be arranged by following the clear instructions provided in the documentation.

The motto of all "trivials" (as lovers of the subject are dubbed) might well be: "It isn't of Earth-shaking importance, but it's certainly fun." That statement also serves as the perfectly apt description of *Trivia Trek* as well.

(Bill Kunkel)

PINBALL PALACE

green, orange and blue, is testimony to designer Jim Patla's purposefulness of thought in bringing to life a singular effort.

Three lanes at top lead down to two thumper bumpers and a center configuration of four drop targets (O-R-B-S) which feature a slight space in the middle. At left is a captive ball chamber with in-line drop targets and increased point values, as well as access either directly from the flippers or as part of a combination shot looping around a lower little lane that provides just the right angle for a ball with any kind of velocity. Meanwhile, over at the right, besides a four bank of drop targets, *Centaur* offers a long, narrow lane up to the top, which, when hit, can activate multi-ball play.

But multi-ball play is different here. They explode from under a "trap door" at the top of the plunger lane and out on the field, with a maximum of four balls possible at once for the intrepid pinballer who thinks he's up to the task. The scoring can be intense, taking full advantage of the seven-digit displays on the backglass, in a test that's sure to take players to the limit, time and time again.

Interaction between the readers and editors of *Electronic Games* helps make this a better magazine. The more we here at EG know about who you are and what you want to read, the better we can satisfy your needs and desires. That's why we run a Reader Poll in every single issue of this magazine. Rest assured that even though we protect the anonymity of every respondent to our survey, the editor personally reads each and every ballot received. And of course, this is also your ballot for casting your vote for the most popular videogames, computer game programs and coin-op arcade machines.

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Programmable Parade	_____	Coin-Op Classroom	_____

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Our magazine-within-a-magazine turns its spotlight on the incredibly varied array of game programs now available for popular home computer systems. Whether your passion is for outer space blast-'em-ups or heavy-think adventure puzzles, this section will point out games you're sure to enjoy.

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Those gourmet joysticks are really making way among gamers from coast to coast. The February issue will contain a rundown on all the new joysticks vying for your attention and your spending money. Are they worth it? Read this article and make an informed decision.

EXPLORING THE ASTRO UNDERGROUND
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